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Gerdien Jonker

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## **Caught in a Nutshell: “Islam” and the Rise of History Textbooks in Germany (1700-2005)**

Gerdien Jonker

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**Abstract** • In this article, I explore the dominant narratives about Islam in German history textbooks since the eighteenth century until the present day. I thereby deconstruct a *longue durée* script with a rather curious pattern. Until the 1980s, textbook narratives about Islam were rooted exclusively in people’s historical imagination. Only when the children of Turkish workers entered the classroom did textbook authors try to accommodate knowledge based on real encounters. By addressing the different stages of this *longue durée* script, I enquire into the functions of narratives as they underpinned a German and European “we.”

**Keywords** • Islam, Crusades, foreign workers, Europeans, *longue durée* scripts, historical genealogy, world, history perspective, diversity concepts

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Tracking down the history of the narratives that deal with Muslims and Islam in German history textbooks can cause a number of surprises. Among other things, I discovered that knowledge about Islam as a teaching subject is intertwined with the birth of history textbooks themselves. Around 1700, the trend to fuse different strands of knowledge into universal histories made it necessary to include some information about the Prophet Muhammad as well. Authors used established church knowledge for this; they did not turn to knowledge derived from encounters and experience. The result was an entry full of prejudices about Islam.

At the time, German history textbooks were still rooted in Protestant scholarship about the meaning of history, and they were produced for Protestant schools. My thesis is that, in this educational context, one of the functions of the narrative about Islam has been the marking of a border between “us” and “not-us,” allowing for German and European we-scenarios to enfold. This could explain why the Islam narrative, once it was anchored, acquired a *longue durée* existence that lasted until the turn of the millennium. Over a period of 300 years, although received in, and adapted to very different historical periods, the narrative remained basically the same in structure, content and message. It contained four basic

elements: (a) the prophet and "his religion," (b) Muslim aggressiveness, (c) the Crusades, and (d) some connection to contemporary politics that serves as a proof of the dangerous nature of this religion.

The impact of migration and global awareness on textbooks around the turn of the millennium finally cast a doubt on the usefulness of this inherited knowledge. When faced with Muslim children, German teachers increasingly looked for updated knowledge in which encounter and human experience played a role. Among other things, this *longue durée* study will show that changing classroom populations resulting from the rising number of immigrants from Muslim majority countries finally persuaded textbook and curriculum writers to reconsider the handed down lore.

Three questions guided this enquiry. What roles do Islam narratives play in history textbooks? How does their *longue durée* character interact with the present? How is new knowledge possible? By way of conclusion, the reader may find some observations about what the *longue durée* structure of the German Islam narrative tells us about European constraints on the development of a common identity which includes Muslims.

### **The *Longue Durée* Narrative**

A "barbarian sect," which spread among Europe's Arab, Tatar and Turkish neighbors, was observed and interpreted in Western Europe from about 800. Pilgrims, crusaders and other travelers to the East brought back rumors and half-truths that were interpreted by churchmen and stitched into the earliest theological interpretation of Islam.<sup>1</sup> Having emerged over some seven centuries, this traditional lore was revived during the Reformation by means of rumors about the Ottomans and their conquests in the Balkans. Using the widespread fear of the Muslim enemy as a polemical weapon, Catholics and Protestants now accused each other of being on a par with the Muslim foe.<sup>2</sup>

To support their argument, both churches produced histories, aiming to prove the "true nature" of their own church, and to accuse the other one of falsifying history. At first, the confessional authors intertwined biblical accounts and church history readings with the newly discovered heritage of Greek and Roman history writers, a mixture that was given very different confessional interpretations.<sup>3</sup> In the course of some 150 years, this enterprise changed to a veritable quest for universal history in which the religious polemics gradually disappeared. The search for non-literary sources, coins, statues and monuments that could corroborate the truthfulness of the literary sources replaced them. Incidentally, it laid the foundation of historiography as a university discipline.<sup>4</sup>

However, the trend to secularize history and to critically examine the sources hardly affected the entry about Muhammad and "his religion."

Presented as a religious “error” and, as such, as part of church history, it was deeply embedded in the history of Christian heretical thought. An emperor of the Byzantine Empire, Heraclius, served as its entry point. This emperor had made himself a name as a heretic, a member of one of those Nestorian “sects” that denied the trinity. The accounts suggest that there was a connection between this heretic and the appearance of a new prophet in Arabia. Moreover, by refusing to pay their sold, the same Heraclius was also accused of mistreating the Arabs who were standing guard on the Byzantine borders, forcing them to embrace Islam and damage Christianity. In the early textbooks, Islam is presented as a result of these “errors.”

Around 1700, learned authors turned the universal history accounts into history textbooks for use in schools. The shift to the educational context forced them to draw a clear picture of “who we are” in contrast to who this “we” is not. The entry about Muhammad and his aggressive followers offered them the marker they needed to distinguish between a civilized European who is adherent to the true church, and a barbaric non-European, enmeshed in some heretical – and dangerous – sect.<sup>5</sup> The following observations have their point of departure here.

### **The Introduction of History as a School Subject in the Eighteenth Century**

When in 1709, Johann Hübner, the school director of a Protestant *Gymnasium* grammar school in Northern Germany, published the first part of his famous “Conversation Lexicon,” a voluminous encyclopedia that was reprinted well into the twentieth century, he had already published several textbooks “for beginners” for use in his school.<sup>6</sup> A wholly new phenomenon in the spread of knowledge, Hübners Lexicon included entries about “not only the religions and the spiritual orders, the empires and the nations, the oceans, seas, rivers and cities ... but also words from foreign languages that are used in the papers and in daily conversation.”<sup>7</sup>

Hübner belonged to a generation of *savants* with universal knowledge, who, born after the Thirty Years’ War, demanded centrality in the Europe-wide “Republic of Letters.” We know their names from large scholarly enterprises involving encyclopedias on all kinds of topics, philological dictionaries, and scholarly handbooks.<sup>8</sup> It is less well known that Hübner and his contemporaries were also dedicated school directors who wrote the first geographies, histories and mathematical textbooks in the German language for the use in their own schools. Thus, at the start of the eighteenth century, a large transfer of knowledge from academia to the educational system took place that helped to establish European knowledge patterns for mass education with a widespread and enduring existence.

In the course of our research we came across many Protestant cities in Germany, where, around 1700, history textbooks were being produced for use in the local *Gymnasium*, among them Nürnberg, Leipzig, and Berlin.<sup>9</sup> They were written by antiquarians, classical historians, theologians and philologists with resounding names, among them Hilmar Curas, Johann Hübner, Johann Georg Eßig, Benjamin Hederich, and Johann David Köhler. In all, during the eighteenth century, some sixty *savants* initiated and continued local productions of history and geography textbooks.<sup>10</sup> To illustrate this singular production, we selected one striking history textbook, written by Johann David Köhler in collaboration with the artist and printer Christoph Weigel, and printed in Nürnberg, *The World in a Nutshell*. Reworked and reprinted by generations of local teachers and school directors, *The World in a Nutshell* was still in use around 1800. Textbook productions in other German cities made it well into the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup>

Although intimately familiar with the Bible, church history and Greek and Latin historians, Köhler also consulted some of the more famous confessional histories of the seventeenth century to write his textbook, among them the Jesuit Tursellinus, the Protestant Clüver and the Pietist von Puffendorf.<sup>12</sup> However, unlike these authors, he neglected confessional differences and also produced a very clearly structured didactical framework. Each century, he presented ten single happenings that were depicted in copper plate drawings and accompanied by rhymes. Since the drawings and the rhymes were designed as tools to memorize the accompanying text, this was a powerful instrument to instill knowledge of the past in the young readers' minds.

On the seven hundred pages of history that this book presents, there are six entries on Muhammad and his followers, covering no more than seven pages. Nonetheless, the way in which they are portrayed and inserted in the master narrative affords us a clear idea of their function.

For three of these entries, we have to go to the seventh century "in the first millennium after the birth of Christ," also coined "The time of the Longobards." Ten pictures illustrate the highlights. The rhyme under the pictures gives a first impression of what matters in this age:

The emperor is beheaded; / his ashes thrown into the sea. / Lord Machmed makes his conquest / ramsacking  
 Babylon as his behest. / The law of Lotharinge / is not of any use. / Celts throttled in the bathtub, / mercy for  
 the Saracens. / When Cilian teaches the Franks; / the weaponry has to clank.<sup>13</sup>

Of the three entries dealing with Muslims, the entry, "The flight of the Arch Fraud Muhammad" deals with the religion of Islam. It is summarized with a short biography of the prophet that bears all misgivings and hatred of bygone ages. We hear about a "wrong" religion, which "in reality" has

**Plate I: The copper plate illustration covering the seventh century AC<sup>14</sup>**

been stitched together from a mixture of Jewish and Christian faiths; about the “false laws” of praying, washing and fasting; the unheard of prohibition of pork meat and wine; the prophets’ growing popularity and his “flight” to Medina. “From that moment,” the text concludes, “he began to spread his religion with violence, through fire and the sword, until he died.”

The second entry, “The Conquest of Persia by the Saracenes,” is about the aggressive nature of this religion’s followers. It is explained by means of the story of emperor Heraclitus and how he mistreated the Saracens. The third entry, “How Emperor Constantin IV Made the Saracens Pay Taxes,” is about submission. It deals with the military encounters between Byzantines and Arabs, which the invention of “Greek fire” decided in favor of the Byzantines.

The eighth, the eleventh, and the seventeenth centuries offer the theater for three more entries. “Mores and Saracens Overpower the Goths in Spain” deals again with Muslim “aggression” and their “rightful” expulsion from Spain. “Gottfried of Bouillons’ Coronation as King of Jerusalem,” depicting the first crusade, introduces the myth of Europe’s rightful defense against the Muslim aggression. Finally, “The Battle at St. Gotthard” recounts a recent military encounter between Habsburgs and Ottomans, bringing the traditional lore about Muslim aggression up to date. These six entries present a basic European script of what “Islam” is about. Its elements, falsehood, deceit and aggressiveness, mainly serve to delineate what civilized Europeans are not. With this educational summary, German and European perceptions of the religion of Islam and its adherents are caught in a nutshell from which it will prove difficult to free themselves.

As noted above, during the eighteenth century, some sixty *savants* initiate and continue local productions of history and geography textbooks. During this time, no lasting contact exists between Germans and inhabitants of the Middle East. Only a handful of geographers and diplomats experience the reality of daily life in the Ottoman Empire, or become acquainted with the culture and hospitality of the Arab people. Some come back with accounts that substantially differ from the established canon. Towards the end of the century, when the influence of the Enlightenment could be seen in education, their experiences were reflected in geographical textbooks:

However, the Arab people have been described to foreign nations in almost the same light. Only a few traveling novelists have been able to cut through the thick curtain of rapacity, theft and pretension, and have presented us with a somewhat better view of their character. Their own and impartial avowal in this matter has our full approval as it contains so much truth that one could easily write it above each Nation, namely they admit that “not all their compatriots think similarly well and act similarly honestly.” Indeed, they themselves often count it as a crime

against their religion that their Nation is not always as scrupulous in fulfilling their promises as the Europeans.<sup>15</sup>

Such novel perceptions did not become established, however. Positive stories about Arabs or Muslims that deviated from the traditional lore simply did not "fit" a master narrative, which imbued the pupils with a historical narrative that started with God's own creation, experienced biblical times, became the history of the triumphant church, defended Europeans against barbarians and sectarians, incorporated the heritage of Greeks and Romans, and mirrored the essence of Christian civilized man. The few that made it into the textbooks were omitted in the following generation of textbooks.

### **Perceptions in the Age of Nation-state Building**

The nineteenth century produced a plethora of foundation myths on which the European nation-states came to rest, thus creating a sense of group identity. Remote military encounters between Latin Christians or Byzantines on the one hand, and Arabs, Turks, Tartars or Mongolians on the other, were rediscovered, not as fastidious military conflicts and protagonists of border clashes, but as existential struggles against the forces of darkness. In this scheme of historical imagination, the people who embodied and represented "Islam" were pictured as Europe's antithesis and the struggle against them was seen as a major event with an almost eschatological meaning.<sup>16</sup> Myths invented the historical genealogy that served to prove the continuity of the nation and the heroes who served as imaginative kernels in the narrative texture. Myths also encouraged collective identity. Their focus was on "independence" – from oppression, from imperial power and, above all, from ethnic and religious entities that were perceived as different.<sup>17</sup>

In view of the patchwork of ethnic, linguistic and religious groups that once made up the European peninsula, one wonders why the foundation fathers still needed Islam as an adversary. But the awakening nation-states, although killing and excluding each other, needed a collective frame to stress their uniqueness as *Europeans*: civilized, rational, enlightened and essentially Christian. It made them imagine "Islam" – a term in which religious traditions, geographical delineations as well as countries, peoples and cultures mingle indiscriminately – as the antithesis of what they themselves were not. One could also call this estimation *inverted Europeanness*.

The nineteenth century was also the age of mass media and mass education. National textbooks served both, creating narratives in which the myth of the Crusades helped to create inversed Europeanness and served as the lens through which western Europe perceived its Muslim

neighbors.<sup>18</sup> The result was an image of "not us" that helped to mobilize the masses behind the idea of the nation. In the textbooks, confessional differences disappear. Entries on Islam start to neglect its religious character in favor of its dangerous and aggressive nature:

The inborn enmity of the Christian and Muslim endeavors necessarily produced a battle of life and death wherever the two cultures met. Such points of contact occurred soon enough after the conquering waves of the clans of Arabia flooding over the borders of this country, and the Eastern-Roman Empire, the Western-Gothic and the Frankish kingdoms endured a centuries-long battle with the followers of the false prophet.<sup>19</sup>

Note that "this country" indicates a territory stretching from Constantinople to Spain. Note also the passive form with which "we" encounter "them." Note finally that the reason for the enmity between Christian and Muslim "cultures" is perceived as a "necessity" deriving from the "laws" of the Koran. These laws, as another textbook maintains, ordain Muslims to spread their religion among people of other beliefs "with fire and the sword":

§ 235 *Islam*. ... It is a major law of the Koran to spread Islam with all possible means and to force peoples with different beliefs to accept it with fire and the sword; in order to fill Muslims with bravery and utter disgust of death they are told that the length of one's life is fixed beforehand, and that those who fall in battle are promised a paradise full of sensual pleasures and black-eyed virgins serving them.<sup>20</sup>

The stress on "the inborn enmity" and a Muslims' free use of "fire and the sword" served to introduce the Crusades as Christianity's legitimate defense against Islam. Wherever the two religious spheres met, or so the German textbook authors suggested, a struggle of life and death ensued, which forced Europe to defend itself. For a number of nation-states, Germany among them, the Crusades thus became one of the basic foundation myths.<sup>21</sup>

### **Emphasizing the Difference: The Crusades**

After 1871, when the German state had been founded, state curricula fixed "The Age of the Crusades" as the major entry, in which Christianity and Islam became juxtaposed. A recurring argument in the curricula states that:

Knowledge of the historic past must fill the character and soul of the child with fear for the laws and institutions of the nation, awaken love

for the fatherland and the *Kaiser* and develop knowledge of the divine rule in history as his innermost conviction.<sup>22</sup>

In the textbooks, the account of the Crusades exploded into a success story that covered almost sixty pages. Its main characters were brave knights, poor pilgrims and a grim, merciless enemy, all of who were set in an exotic, faraway landscape. Thanks to the diligent work of hundreds of German historians, textbook authors were soon able to choose between masses of gripping details. But beyond the gripping details, crusade stories offered German children a space in which to develop an identity in which “our folks” and “Christianity” took alternate places of honor. In the German society (or rather, societies) at that time, there still existed considerable differences between languages, regions and identities of Bavarians, Prussians, and other Germans, who did not consider that they belonged to one ethnic group, let alone one nation. Because they stressed the narrative of the Christian community (as different from Islam), history textbooks played a crucial role in the creation of national unity. When dealing with the Crusades, the assumption that “all of Christianity” wanted to free the Holy Land seemed to be highly plausible:

It was at this period that the thought of uniting all of Christianity in one procession to Jerusalem, a thought, which had been nourished by the popes for a long time, was put into practice. During the Counsel of Clermont, Pope Urban II urged to undertake a war procession to the Holy Land to free it from the hands of the unbelieving Turks and many French and Norman knights took the cross from his hands.<sup>23</sup>

This little, often repeated sequence again set the coordinates for the basic dichotomy between “we” (we Europeans, all of Christianity) and “they” (Arabs, Turks, the Muslim world). The expansive “we” successfully hides the fact that crusaders were mainly recruited among the nobility of northwestern France, whom the Germans originally had not cared to join. The narrative blandly turns the French into “our folks” (*die Unseren*):

As they left the hamlet during the second morning hour on Good Friday, they suddenly fell into the hands of the Arabs. The latter rushed upon them, attacking them like wolves and wounding them. Our folks at first tried to defend themselves but soon enough were forced to flee back to the hamlet because they were not carrying any weapons. Many of them were killed whilst escaping.<sup>24</sup>

Once these coordinates were in place, the horror could unfold. “Our folks” were pictured as innocent pilgrims, who, on the very day that Jesus had died on the cross, had made their way towards Jerusalem unarmed. Often enough, Turks and Arabs were likened to wolves attacking their

fleeing victims from behind. Demonizing the Muslim foe became part and parcel of the narrative. Some time later, in the ugly, inflated language of the National Socialists, the Muslim enemy even became a monster of mythical proportions. His local defenses in Palestine were equaled to the Mongolian hordes, whereas the Crusader armies blended with the *Reconquista*:

But the Crusader armies were at least able to stop the threatening approach of the Mongol-Mohammedan conquerors. In Spain, among the remains of the Western-Gothic nobility, it kindled the desire to reconquer the empire. From the mountains in the north where they had found last refuge, they branded against the moors and, in a battle that lasted for centuries, ousted them from European soil.<sup>25</sup>

Although there are considerable differences between the German national narratives of the 1880s and the National Socialist narratives, the Muslim story remained essentially the same and its message rang out loud and clear: that they attacked us; that we only did what was necessary to safeguard Europe. It was a mono-ethnic perception that was created to bridge and integrate internal differences and for that reason could not cater for diversity.

Once the National Socialist regime had been defeated, the Allies undertook the reform of the German educational system. Russians reformed the East, American, British and French reformed the West and both sides produced new textbooks. But while the split between East and West Germany became firmly established, both Germanies continued to teach the established script – the biography of the prophet, the menacing nature of Islam, the aggressive Arabs, and the Crusades. However, their importance for the national cause dwindled. East German textbooks even made some effort to break the link between Crusades and legitimate defense, harshly judging this episode as robbery. The accounts speak of looting parties, cruelties, religious zeal and delusion. “Nonetheless,” as W. Semjonov claims, “notwithstanding their lack of success, the meaning of the Crusades for the development of western Europe must not be underestimated. It contributed to the development of European commerce in the Mediterranean.”<sup>26</sup>

With these lines, a new subject entered the narrative. The theme of economic – and, to a lesser extent, also cultural – profit began to unfold. It did not take long before West German textbooks, under the heading “Islam Threatens the Christian West” and reproducing the established script in full, also inserted small sequences that acknowledged the culture of the “other”:

Zealously, the Arabs learned from the defeated cultures: Persians and Indians, but also from the writings of the old Greeks and Romans. The

Arab scholars later conveyed the knowledge they had gleaned from astronomy, philosophy and medicine to the inhabitants of the West. We owe to the Arabs the "Arab numbers", which they had adapted from the Indians, and algebra. Many products of trading diligence, like weapons and cloth, were superior to those of the West.<sup>27</sup>

The choice of words – zealously, convey, trading diligence – reveals that the admission of cultural knowledge still took a certain amount of teeth grinding. The text suggests that the Arabs merely acted as a transit, passively passing on what other people had invented. This approach to Muslim culture is not unusual in the textbook accounts of the 1960s and 1970s either. They reveal the difficulty of taking one's distance from the 'we are superior' spirit.

After the Second World War, in the subject matter for the tenth grade, West German textbooks start a new narrative, which summarizes country reports of modern Muslim states. But when the oil crisis, the Iranian revolution and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict erupted, these more or less neutral accounts quickly evolved into tales of tensions and conflict threatening the international community. Daily life in Muslim majority countries disappeared from view before the subject had had time to unfold.

### **Changing Curricula in Response to Changing Classrooms**

Between 1965 and 2000, due to a politics of importing "guest workers" for menial and undesirable jobs, the Muslim population in Germany rose from an almost negligible number to three and a half million people. Although an immigration country since 1945, it did not acknowledge the newcomers. From the beginning, it was generally considered that foreign workers would stay only temporarily and they were therefore given little attention. Remarkably, politicians did not anticipate that the law for unlimited residency would encourage them to reunite with their families in Germany. However, after 1970, many Muslim men and women turned their back on the basic dormitories in which they had been accommodated, and founded families. Twenty years later, they reached a critical mass that surfaced in the public realm. By then, North-Rhine Westphalia counted one million Muslim inhabitants; the inner city quarters of Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen and Frankfurt had become multi-ethnic and multi-religious. Remarkably once again, the only channel of communication between the majority of society and the Muslim population remained the educational sphere.

When the children of the first generation of foreign workers began to enter school in the 1980s, educators were at a loss. Defined by menial work and increasingly on the dole, foreign workers by now represented

Germany's lowest social class. Teachers found themselves faced with language deficiencies, social problems with parents who did not respond to school requests of parental involvement, and a string of more subtle difficulties, ranging from socialization patterns to class differences. Textbook writers respond to classroom changes by subsuming all of their problems under the heading of Islam. As far as historical knowledge is concerned, the established Islam narrative is their only source of reference. Consequently, it is turned into an instrument with which the newcomers are encountered and interpreted. But reaction comes not only from textbook writers, for curriculum makers also respond. Their answer is a re-formulation of the aims of history teaching, reframing the Islam narrative so often that in the end it becomes obsolete.

Germany consists of sixteen states with governments and ministries and a great deal of freedom from central government in educational matters. The states supervise their own textbooks, which may only be used in the relevant state, offering their schools a choice of five to seven books per topic that remain in use for five years. Next to primary schools, each state supervises three types of secondary school: *Hauptschule* (grades seven to ten), *Realschule* (grades seven to ten), and the *Gymnasium* (grades seven to thirteen). The production of textbooks and curricula is commensurate.

Reading through the history curricula of the 1980s in West Germany, one learns that, during this time, the conservative Christian Democrat state of Bavaria opts for "the discipline's basic concern to overcome *prejudice*, to become involved in the *problems* of other people, groups and nations and to support *the underprivileged*" (emphasis mine, GJ).<sup>28</sup> The *Stoffplan* (plan of contents to be taught) mentions the crusaders as an example for the study of Palestine, "under Islamic rule for hundreds of years" and of crusaders, whose business it is "to install a worldwide economic exchange." The mental map behind this curriculum seems to be led by considerations of post-war Germany facing the problems of, and responsibility for the "third world". In this respect, the Bavarian curriculum of 1980 still mirrors the post-war curricula. A subconscious superiority hovers between the lines.

By contrast, the Social Democrat state of North-Rhine Westphalia is already in search of "identity," which it formulates as "self-determination" in combination with "political competence," "active social commitment" and "responsibility for the lives of humankind."<sup>29</sup> The introduction of a new entry, "Allah is Great," into the *Stoffplan* is the first indication that changes are taking place. In view of the changing equilibrium in the classroom, the "identity" claim is achieved by taking into focus "Islam" together with Muslims in Germany, migration, cultural conflict, xenophobia, tourism and asylum seekers, as well as a discussion about the relationship between religion and politics. Although still something of a jumble, with heavy overtones of German responsibility for the rest of the world, it sets the switches for a direction that, in time, other states will adopt.

In his suggestions for curriculum development dating from 1991, Klaus Gebauer, responsible for the history and politics curricula in NRW, remarks under the entry "Allah is Great" that the intention of this unit should be "to get to know Islam as a religion and social movement," and "to encounter Muslims in their own sphere with tolerance and solidarity." The passive noun skillfully avoids the use of "we," but the line of vision is clear. The wording hints at differing views ("in their own sphere"), which "tolerance and solidarity" must remedy. The author also criticizes the earlier Islam narratives as "unhistorical," "full of dilettantism" and, addressing textbook authors who pictured Islam as the enemy of Christianity, "irresponsible."<sup>30</sup> His criticism introduces new legitimization by means of knowledge, and it marks the change from a "then" (mainly the 1970s) and a "now" that is slowly beginning to make itself felt.

In the 1990s, in states with large populations of Muslim migrants, the political frame gradually replaces the religious one. When dealing with Islam, the Berlin curriculum advises teachers to teach their pupils "to transpose themselves into the thinking of political dissenters" (Berlin, *Gymnasium*, 1991/2004). But East Germany, which has just dismissed the socialist conformity of societal development as the main principle for history teaching, adopts the traditional Islam script. The reason for that is clear enough. Apart from a few remaining Vietnamese workers, there is no migrant population. Anyhow, in 2000, in all the sixteen German states, the Crusades are still the peg from which the story is hung.

It is only from 2002 onwards that things really begin to happen. In three years' time, all the German states issued new curricula, thus producing a rarely achieved, all-German "cut". Henceforth, in the curricula of Brandenburg (2002), Saarland (2003), Saxony-Anhalt (2003) and Bremen (2004), no mention is made of Islam any more. Instead, the reader encounters topics like tourism, and migration, underlining that "we" are part of globalization. Brandenburg struggles with xenophobia and right-wing extremism. Saxony-Anhalt introduces China as an alternative to Islam. Berlin continues the course of political difference and prescribes "a critical view of ideologies."<sup>31</sup> Hamburg (2004) places its hopes on migration and multi-religiousness. Bremen advises that German history be taught as part of European history and helps to bring about a pan-European consciousness.<sup>32</sup> Saxony-Anhalt takes one step further and pleads for an understanding of history as the type of knowledge, which enables pupils to surpass their own cultural consciousness and time framework.<sup>33</sup> NRW sticks to the traditional Islam narrative while introducing images of the self and the "other" in a historical perspective.

The latest curriculum proposal, under the heading of "What People Knew About Each Other," focuses on different perceptions and different geographical knowledge of the world between Asia (including the Arab world) and Europe as well as on different worldwide forms of cultural

exchange – such as mission, pilgrimage, spread of Islam, tourist and economic travels.<sup>34</sup> In other words, the cut also signals a withdrawal from national history concepts towards European and world history. In line with the increasing global communication, the established Islam narrative is re-embedded in worldwide movements.

The majority of the aforementioned states are governed by Social Democrats. By contrast, the Christian-Democrat states of Hesse, Lower Saxony and Saxony do not do away with the Islam narrative but transfer it to the "optional" corner. The Christian Democrat States of Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg relocate parts to religious education.

In sum, between 2002 and 2004, the entry about the Crusades, which in the past served to secure nationalistic, fascistic and post-war modern German identities, loosens its moorings. In the Social-Democrat states (except NRW) it was omitted, while in the Christian-Democrat states it is being toyed with. A study of the alternatives – the world in movement, global streams of asylum seekers, migrants, tourists, and fugitives but also China, xenophobia and right-wing extremism – teaches us that the entry has become too narrow to explain what is going on "out there". Whatever the future may bring, curriculum makers try to face the new reality and adjust the aims of history teaching accordingly.

### **The Example of North-Rhine Westphalia. In Search of New Knowledge**

To track down how the curricula changes influenced the traditional textbook entries about Islam, the last part of this article offers a tour through the history textbooks of North-Rhine Westphalia (NRW). NRW, which harbors the traditional "coal and iron" region and among the first to haul in foreign workers, experienced a quick growth in the Turkish and Yugoslavian population in the 1970s and 1980s, which rises in the course of three decennia from a few thousand to one million inhabitants. This circumstance meant that the state was destined to become a trendsetter in adapting education to the changing equilibrium in the classroom. The place to deal with Turkish, Bosnian and Albanian children and their parents is the traditional entry on Muhammad, the spread of Islam with the sword, and the Crusades.

In the following, I quote from textbooks for the *Hauptschule* because, until very recently, children from migrant families to a large degree visited this type of school, while the higher and socially better situated *Realschule* and the *Gymnasium* still presented unattainable goals. In these books, the Islam entry has not changed much since the nineteenth century. The master narrative is set in the Stone Age, followed by the early civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, and Rome. Then it turns to Europe and the relationship between Romans and Germans, explaining

why Germans are next in the genealogy of world civilizations. Once this has been settled, attention turns to others and how the borders between “we” and “they” have been established. This is the *locus classicus* for the Crusades. Treacherously, it includes not only the biography of the prophet and the nature of Islam, but also Muslims in Germany and crises in the Middle East.

In 1973, the reader still encounters the old Islam narrative in its inimical clothing. We learn that “the Saracens” did not know fear, that they spread their religion via “holy war” and that the warriors were promised black-eyed virgins in paradise.<sup>35</sup> In 1987, we stumble upon a story that relates how “the Arabs” spread their belief “with fire and the sword.”<sup>36</sup> But in the course of the 1990s, and in fewer cases after 2001, the narrative is given a more cautious character. The Crusades are reassessed. The sermon of Pope Urban, who initially mobilized the masses, is questioned. “Was it propaganda?” the authors ask. “Were the Crusades a mistake?” The story begins to change its focus from the Crusades’ military character to the economic and cultural consequences. There is an underlying message that can be captured thus: “whatever happened back then, it was also a multicultural experience,” which thereby offers a projection screen for multicultural society in the present.

In the 1990s, the double perspective entered the narrative. Textbooks offered “our” as well as “their” side and back them up with different sources. This time, the message runs: “this is not only about our German, European side. After all, they had a view of their own and we have to make room for it.” This, too, offers a blueprint for dealing with the present. Finally, reality itself is addressed. Sequences appear that are captured with phrases such as “Muslims among us,” “We get to know each other” and “Visit to a mosque,”<sup>37</sup> or, in a slightly altered form, “Why did you come to us?” “Being a foreigner in Germany” and “Looking for Muslims in Germany.”<sup>38</sup> In other words, the classroom is transformed into an ethnographic expedition, which starts to produce its own knowledge. In theory at least, this opens a window on learning through experiencing. Leaving the methodological difficulties aside (Muslims pupils are turned into learning objects, a method which, if anything, only strengthens the us/them binary), an opening to break away from the petrified script is finally offered.

Leafing through the twelve to fifteen pages that usually cover the Islam narrative in the NRW history textbooks, what strikes the reader is its exclusive focus on religion. The word Islam is very prominent and Turks and Arabs are pictured as religious as a matter of course illustrations show mosques, the Hajj, praying Muslims and covered women, and generally serve to underline the religious character of the Orient. Recurring titles include “Islam Becomes a World Religion,”<sup>39</sup> “Allah is Great,”<sup>40</sup> or “Jews, Christians and Islam.”<sup>41</sup> Under these headings, the traditional

script is reinterpreted. We encounter introductions to the Koran, the five pillars, and the biography of Muhammad. Islam expands towards Europe, bringing Islamic culture to Spain. The narrative ends with the Crusades. With these elements in tow, the narrative now turns to the present, focuses on Islam in Germany and stresses its distance from modern, secular Germans. Gender and Jihad are offered subjects for comparison.

From this perspective, one tends to overlook the fact that the objects of study – Muslim children and their families – are largely detached from religion. Turks, Iraqi, Palestinians, Egyptians or Iranians who fled their country to escape the Islamic revolution frequently migrated from societies that were secular at the time of their departure, and often they continue to live secular lives. Their children do not know very much about Islam. To them, being a Muslim signifies a cultural membership in which religion plays admittedly a, but not the major part that the German interlocutors project. According to the institutionalized didactical perception however, Islam is the essence of what German society “knows” about its Muslim population. In terms of relevant information, Muslims are the societies’ new fascination, backed up by political judgments and a growing scholarship in the field of political studies. Exercises frequently consist of questions drafted for German pupils: “Ask your Muslim friends how they pray,” and “Ask your Muslim friends whether their family went to the Hajj.” They give a good impression of what German society thinks it does not know. These questions often evoke embarrassment among the Muslim pupils.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the history textbook, among the subject matter for the tenth grade, a Third World narrative about the Middle East has matured. Starting in the 1960s with the insertion of some country reports that soon expand into “international crises” such as the Iranian revolution and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the 1990 books add re-islamization and the dangers of fundamentalism. Main headings capture “The headscarf debate,”<sup>42</sup> “Cause of conflict: the erection of mosques,” “Cause of conflict: Muslim festivals” and “EU membership of Turkey.”<sup>43</sup> By 2001, this has become the established place where explosive political situations in the Muslim world can be addressed. Instead of presenting the old Third World perspective (“We bear responsibility for them”), the worksheets advise that the pupils learn to argue from different perspectives. The evolution marks the switch from a more or less post-colonial approach to mentally taking the place of the other. Within this framework, the first photographs of Bin Laden and of the twin towers appear.

In view of the mechanisms of collective memory, in which crises more readily take root than good tidings, twenty years are a very short time to establish new knowledge. However, NRW textbooks manage to introduce new methods for gaining knowledge about the other, notwithstanding a questionable method, which continues and concretizes the us/them bi-

nary in the classroom. In its wake, classrooms are transformed into ethnographical expeditions, which generate their own knowledge over and beyond the traditional lore. They manage to disclose fresh knowledge that neither the geographers' accounts of the eighteenth century nor the reports on countries and peoples of the twentieth could ever establish.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

Over three hundred years, educational knowledge about Muslims in Germany has been caught in a nutshell that featured four characteristics: Muslims are lying; Muslims are aggressive; Muslims are threatening; Muslims force Europeans to legitimately defend themselves. It was shown that the eighteenth century inherited this lore from older church perceptions. During the Reformation, confessional authors used it to accuse one another of adhering to the wrong church. When the first textbooks were being written, it was introduced as secure knowledge and interlaced with contemporary accounts of Ottoman attack. Alternative accounts, introduced into the geography textbooks towards the end of the eighteenth century, could not cut through this thick layer of prejudice.

Instead, the emerging nation-state used the established educational knowledge about Muslims to build the myth of European civilization. It turned the image of Islam into the antithesis of what they themselves were not. As a consequence, Muslims became inversed Europeans, the very antithesis of the imagined we-group. The tale of the Crusades helped to imagine Arabs, Turks, Mongols and Tatars indiscriminately as a wolf pack attacking "us" from behind.

After the Second World War, the narrative became more sobered and new educational knowledge, based on country reports, was introduced into the textbooks, but it appeared difficult to do away with the sense of superiority. When children of Turkish guest workers entered the classroom in large numbers, the traditional narrative served at first as the main reference with which to interpret their perceived otherness. Nonetheless, in a process of trial and error in which classrooms were temporarily turned into ethnographical expeditions, a new and more realistic knowledge started to seep in. After 2000, realizing that the traditional lore was not of much use to describe the societal problems of a group of immigrants, curriculum makers in a range of German states started to do away with the Islam narrative. But the phenomenon of Bin Laden and the burning towers once again tempted them to look at Islam as the source of the trouble.

The history of the Islam narrative in German history textbooks offers some answers to the questions raised in the introduction to this contribution. Throughout, its function seems to have been the drawing of a bor-

der between "Europe" and "Islam." Its *longue durée* character of prejudice and fear could not avoid the fact that, at times, different perceptions that counteracted this antithesis seeped in. But we also saw that, as soon as the old sediments met with new fear, such perceptions could not be easily maintained.

How, then, is new knowledge possible? In the history textbooks after 2002 the traditional Islam script began to rapidly lose its moorings. Among textbook and curriculum authors, there seems to be a growing realization that the narrative does not fit the overall frame any more, that "we" are part of globalization, and a world history perspective is required in order to explain to the new generation who they are. Slowly but gradually, the nutshell is cracking. German history education is opening its doors to diversity concepts that intertwine strands of different narrative traditions, including different experiences with, and different perceptions of history, culture and religion. However, a new narrative, one that is able to explain in a satisfying manner their shared identity to very diverse bearers of histories and traditions, is still highly contingent.

- <sup>1</sup> Guibert de Nogent, *Gesta Dei per Francos: The Deeds of God Through the Franks*, www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/4370 (last accessed 18 November 2010).
- <sup>2</sup> Martin Brecht, "Luther und die Türken," in *Europa und die Türken der Renaissance*, Bodo Guthmüller and Wilhelm Kühlmann, eds. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag 2000), 9-27; Johannes Helmrath, "Pius I und die Türken," in *ibid.*, 27-137.
- <sup>3</sup> Gerdien Jonker, "The Longue Durée of the Islam Narrative: The Emergence of a Script for German History Education (1550 to 1804)," in *Narrating Islam. Interpretations of the Muslim World in European Texts*, Gerdien Jonker and Shiraz Thobani, eds. (London: IB Tauris, 2009), 11-40.
- <sup>4</sup> Arnaldo Momigliano, *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 54ff, 132ff.
- <sup>5</sup> Jonker, "The Longue Durée," 28ff.
- <sup>6</sup> Johann Hübners, Rect. Gymn. Martisburg. *Kurtze Fragen Aus der Neuen und alten Geographie: Zum guten Fundament Der curieuses und Politischen Wissenschaften Bequem und deutlich eingerichtet, Und Bey dieser neuen oder zweyten Edition an vielen Orten verbessert, Auch mit einem vollständigern Register versehen* [Leipzig: Gleditsch, 1693, 1699].
- <sup>7</sup> Johann Hübner, *Reales Staats-Zeitungs und Conversations-Lexikon: Darinnen so wohl die Religionen und geistlichen Orden, die Reiche und Staaten, Meere, Seen, Flüsse, Städte ... Als auch Andere in Zeitungen und täglicher Conversation vorkommende aus fremden Sprachen entlehnte Wörter ... klar und deutlich beschrieben werden zu ... / Nebst vollständigen Registern und einer erneuerten Vorrede Herrn Johannes Hübners*, Rectoris zu S. Johannis in Hamburg (Leipzig: Gleditsch, 1709).
- <sup>8</sup> Ulrich Johannes Schneider, *Seine Welt Wissen. Enzyklopädien in der frühen Neuzeit*. Katalog zur Ausstellung der Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel (Wolfenbüttel, June-November 2006), 125-162.
- <sup>9</sup> For more detail, see my forthcoming monograph *Im Spiegelkabinett. Europas' Gedächtnis zwischen christlichem Abendland, jüdischem Erbe und Abgrenzung vom Islam* (forthcoming, 2011).
- <sup>10</sup> My own samples are based on the historical collection in the Georg Eckert Institute and spot checks in the Herzog August Library in Wolfenbüttel. See *Im Spiegelkabinett*.
- <sup>11</sup> Methodologically, the focus has been laid on reconstructing the mental map of each history textbook (step 1). Once this was settled, the place and function of those segments dealing with Islam and Muslims were defined (step 2). Focusing on textbooks that were often reprinted produced a sample covering the historical period from 1700 onwards in intervals of ten to twenty years (step 3). Comparison of mental maps made it possible to systematically track differences, both of synchronic (for instance between Protestant and Catholic production sites) and diachronic nature (between time periods) (step 4). The final sample included narrative segments which either seemed typical of a certain time period or which strikingly revealed their function in the master narrative (step 5).
- <sup>12</sup> See Jonker, "The longue durée," 19ff. and 25ff.
- <sup>13</sup> Johann David Köhlers, P. P. *Gründliche Erzählung der merckwürdigsten Welt-Geschichten aller Zeiten: von Anfang der Welt biß auf Gegenwärtige, so in den historischen Kupfer-Tafeln der Gedächtniß-Hülflichen Bilder-Lust, sonsten Die Welt in einer Nuß betittelt, vorkommen und zu besondern Behuf und Belustigung, so wohl der studierenden Jugend, vornehmlich in dem GYMNASIO EGIDIANO in Nürnberg (...), vorstellig gemacht worden von Christoph Weigeln* (Nuremberg, in Verlag Christoph Weigels seel. Wittwen, 1726). To capture the rhyme, the English translation is rather free. The German text reads, "Der Kaiser wird geköpft;/ Die Asch im Meer geschöpft./ Fürst Machmed muß durchgehen,/ und Babel Sieg Hafft stehen. / Das Lehnrecht Lotharings / Nicht Grimwald isst viel Nütz / Die Kelte würgt in Bade, / Der Saracen kriegt Gnade./ Lehrt Kilian die Francken / So muß die Waffe wanken."
- <sup>14</sup> Köhler, *Die Welt in einer Nuß*, 396.
- <sup>15</sup> K. Hammersdorfer and C.K Kosche, *Asia, ein geographisch-historisches Lesebuch zum Nutzen der Jugend und ihrer Erzieher* (Leipzig, 1786), 235-6.
- <sup>16</sup> Etienne Francois and Hagen Schulze, "Das emotionale Fundament der Nationen," in *Mythen der Nationen. Ein europäisches Panorama*, Monika Flacke, ed. (Munich and Berlin: Koehler & Amelang, 1998), 17-33, 25.
- <sup>17</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Editions, 1983).
- <sup>18</sup> Gerdien Jonker and Shiraz Thobani, *Narrating Islam. Interpretations of the Muslim World in European Texts* (London: IB Tauris, 2009).
- <sup>19</sup> Heinrich Leo, *Lehrbuch der Universalgeschichte zum Gebrauche in höheren Unterrichtsanstalten. 2. Band / 2. Auflage: Die Geschichte des Mittelalters* (Halle: Bei Eduard Anton, 1839), 145.

- <sup>20</sup> Georg Weber, *Lehrbuch der Weltgeschichte mit Rücksicht auf Cultur, Literatur und Religionswesen, und einen Abriß der deutschen Literaturgeschichte als Anhang. Für höhere Schulanstalten und zur Selbstbelehrung. 2. unveränderter Abdruck* (Leipzig: Verlag von Wilhelm Engelmann, 1847), 170.
- <sup>21</sup> Monika Flacke, in *Mythen der Nationen. Ein europäisches Panorama* (Munich-Berlin: Koehler & Amelang, 1998) corroborates this observation, especially the contributions on collective memory and popular culture in Belgium, Germany, Austria and Poland. The contributions illustrate most strikingly how the three narrative segments (Islam – Crusades – Turks) threatening Vienna became welded in a popular representation of the threat and defence of Europe.
- <sup>22</sup> *Der Normal-Lehrplan für die Elementarschulen in Elsaß-Lothringen* (Elsaß-Lothringen, 1883), 88.
- <sup>23</sup> David Müller, *Leitfaden zur Geschichte des deutschen Volkes* (Berlin, 1888, 6th printing), 44.
- <sup>24</sup> Theodor Scheiblhuber, *Deutsche Geschichte. Das Mittelalter* (Berlin, 1928, 8th printing), 141.
- <sup>25</sup> *Lehrbuch der Geschichte. Oberstufe 1* (Breslau: Diesterweg, 1937), 181.
- <sup>26</sup> W. F. Semjonow, *Geschichte des Mittelalters* (Leipzig, 1952), 145.
- <sup>27</sup> *Grundzüge der Geschichte. Mittelstufe/2* (Braunschweig: Diesterweg, 1965), 10.
- <sup>28</sup> *Lehrplan für das Gymnasium* (Bayern, 1980/ 2003), Introduction.
- <sup>29</sup> *Lehrplan für die Hauptschule* (Nord-Rhein-Westfalen, 1983/ 2007), Introduction.
- <sup>30</sup> Klaus Gebauer, *Vom Faustkeil zur deutschen Einigung. Handreichung Geschichte-Politik* (NRW: Landesinstitut für Schule und Weiterbildung. Soest: Soester Verlagskontor, 1991), 37-52.
- <sup>31</sup> *Rahmenplan für das Gymnasium* (Berlin, 1991/ 2004), Introduction.
- <sup>32</sup> *Lehrplan für Sekundärstufe 1, Realschule* (Bremen, 2004), Introduction.
- <sup>33</sup> *Rahmenplan für das Gymnasium* (Sachsen-Anhalt, 1994/ 2003), Introduction.
- <sup>34</sup> *Curriculum proposal for Gymnasia in Niedersachsen* (Hanover: Ministry of Education, 11.05.2007).
- <sup>35</sup> *Geschichte für die Hauptschule in NRW* (NRW: Verlag Ludwig Auer, 1973), 27ff.
- <sup>36</sup> *Die Reise in die Vergangenheit I* (Braunschweig: Westermann, Ausgabe für Nordrhein-Westfalen, 1987), 32ff.
- <sup>37</sup> *Durchblick. Hauptschule 7/5 & 10/5* (Braunschweig: Westermann, 2001), 140-173.
- <sup>38</sup> *Mitmischen. Hauptschule 7/3* (Munich: Klett, 1999), 110.
- <sup>39</sup> *Entdecken & Verstehen. Realschule 7/2* (Berlin: Cornelsen, 1995), 242-254.
- <sup>40</sup> *Durchblick. Hauptschule 7/5 & 10/5* (Braunschweig: Westermann, 2001), 140-173.
- <sup>41</sup> *Geschichte Real. Hauptschule 1/6* (Munich: Klett, 2003), 218-270.
- <sup>42</sup> *Durchblick. Hauptschule 7/5 & 10/5* (Braunschweig: Westermann, 2001), 140.
- <sup>43</sup> *Geschichte Real Hauptschule 3/7* (Munich: Klett, 2005), 218-270.