

IMAGE OF THE OTTOMANS IN BOSNIAN TEXTBOOKS PUBLISHED AFTER 2007

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Abstract

Division of historical consciousness in Bosnia and Herzegovina started before the Yugoslav Wars, but this division of historiographies and approaches towards the past resulted with more openly manifestation of the divisions to educational system and history textbooks during the wartime and post Dayton era. Even though International Community tried to change poisonous environment of ethnic hatred in which textbooks are produced, except few successes with Bosniak textbooks, not much positive development was achieved. Reform period which started in 1998 today is seen as an unfinished project. In Bosnia and Herzegovina three different versions of history with two of them having the focus point in neighboring Serbia and Croatia are taught to the students. Besides the fact that students are learning three different histories, there is a certain level of hatred and fear of others spreading through history textbooks. History textbooks became an important tool for poisoning the minds of the youth and building the barriers towards the others. This is the case especially with Serb and Croat textbooks in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Ottoman period in Balkans is mainly seen as a "dark age of the Balkans" as it is underlined in one Serbian textbook and to lesser extend in Croat ones. Even though Bosniaks see Ottoman period in more positive light than other two ethnic groups, there are certain topics and periods where it is possible to see romanticistic and nationalistic tone towards the Ottomans. History textbooks in Bosnia are having negative contribution for country's possible future dissolution and it is the one of the main source of stereotype engineering that country is passing in the last decades and which is one of the main reason of the recent wars. In the times where country is confronting with secessionist threat, it is highly important to start building Bosnian statehood and understanding of others through history textbooks, otherwise we can expect new turmoil in the region known for its sensitivity towards the ethnic conflicts.

Keywords: History Textbooks; Image; Ottomans; Historiography and Imagology

Introduction

For a very long time history textbooks in the Balkans region are the big matter of discussion and one of the most sensitive issues. Especially after the Yugoslav wars, history textbooks issue walks hand in hand with the local politics which is full of ethnic tensions. Almost in all countries of the Balkans region, there is an aim to effect and spread state agendas and deviated view of the past among younger generations through educational system and in this case through history textbooks. Textbooks became a tool for brainwashing and building the tensions between societies. Some history textbooks are more filled with the nationalism than others, but it is common to almost all of them to have nationalistic and

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ethnocentric approach to history.

After the collapse of Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia some topics of history which were considered as taboo through the Socialist Period, few years before the war and during the war started entering the academical debates. Because historiography is one of the most sensitive areas this negative tone had a huge impact on the formation of new generation of history textbooks. People of ex-Yugoslavia were founding alibi in the past for the new ideas that were supposed to build new ethnocentric societies and nation states.

One ex Republic of Yugoslavia that was the most affected by this negative tone and still feels the pressure of romanticist ethnohistoriography certainly is Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is composed of three different ethnic groups Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats which are affiliated with three different religions, Islam, Orthodox Christianity and Catholicism. When the war broke out, these three ethnic groups found themselves on different sides of the trenches. During the war all this hatred that was accumulated through the horrors of the war and in the eras before, had a huge impact on history textbooks. Others who are not part of same ethnic group, were shown as a historical enemies and were blamed for all the horrors and sins of the past through textbooks.

But if we put internal hatred and internal stereotypes between these three ethnic societies build upon wrong interpretation of the past, what is common for the region as a whole is that they have “common historical enemy.” Balkans are considered as a part of Ottoman legacy which automatically brings Ottoman Turks as a common enemy. It is important to mention that Ottomans are not seemed as a enemy on same level among all people in Bosnia and Herzegovina. For example Bosniaks are looking more favourably to Ottoman era, than Serbs or Croats.

After long period of not interfering by the western countries, in the winter of 1995 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina was stopped by US sponsored peace talks held in Dayton, Ohio. Clinton government succeed in bringing the peace to this war thorn country, which suffered huge humanitarian losses which took about 100.000 lives. So after this agreemeent country entered Post-Dayton era. By the agreemeent, country was separated into two entities. Larger part of the country was under the Bosniak-Croat Federation which formed about 51% of country's territory. This entity is separeted between 10 Cantons which all to some extend have autonomy. Some of the Cantons have Bosniak and some Croat majority. On the other side about 49% of the country is run by Serbian entity called Republika Srpska, which also has huge autonomy, but still part of the Bosnia and Herzegovina. Small part of country which has specific nature of governance and is not dominated by neither of the ethnic groups is called Brcko District. Dayton peace accords left the country with the weak central authority. The situation with the education system and history textbooks

is not much different then the way how country is organized.

History textbooks that entered market during the war and immediatly after the war, were seemed as a threat to multicultural functioning of Bosnia by International community. Many institutions commonly called as a International Community, felt a need for history textbooks to be reformed.

Attempts to Reform History Textbooks

Organizations that took participation in the project and sponsored whole process were: Office of High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina, OSCE, Council of Europe, UNESCO and World Bank. Aim was to creat textbooks that was supposed to build a sense of common history. First step for the normalization of the textbooks was done in 1998. Sarajevo Canton was chosen as the first place where project was meant to be implemented. After project was successfully implemented in Canton of Sarajevo, plan was to do same in other places of Bosnia and Herzegovina. With the sponsorship of International Community representatives from Federation and Republika Srpska gathered and signed the *Agreement Regarding Textbook Review and Removal of Offensive Material*. This agreemeent was renewed in June. After the agreemeent was signed few more agreemeents came after. When Bosnia applied for membership in Council of Europe, there was a need to remove offensive materials from history textbooks, so meeting was organized in Mostar in 19th July 1999.

That year The Agreement on Removal of Objectionable Material from Textbooks to be used in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1999-2000 School Year was signed in Mostar. Probably becuase of various problems and attempts to evade the actions, Implementation of the Agreemeent of July 19th on the Removal of Objectionable Material from Textbooks to be used in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1999-2000 School Year, was signed in August in Banja Luka. Without loosing any speed in progress, there were attempts to write common curriculum. Agreement regarding the curriculum was signed in 2000 by ministers who gathered and joint declaration was published. Now was the time to write a textbook that everyone would be satisfied with. Before the starting to write a common textbook, first step was to define objectionable parts of the content. To do this work, committees from the two entities were selected. In parts were they disagree Independent Committees formed by OHR, UNESCO and Council of Europe was supposed to intervene. Objectionable passages were selected with two methods. First method was that the passages which are objectionable were to be blacked out and second method was to stamp objectionable passages. Stamped parts included this text: "The following passage contains material of which the truth has not been established, or that may be offensive or misleading; the material is currently under review."

There were many tries to evade reformation of the textbooks. In many schools

old textbooks were still in use. In some schools objectionable passages were hung on the bulletin boards, so the students could see those passages. Reforms were supposed to include not just history, but geography, language classes, visual culture, music, music culture, economy and society, and knowledge of the society. According to Ahmed Alibasić a professor at the Faculty of Islamic Studies in Sarajevo who researched Image of Ottomans in Bosnian history textbooks, even if he could not get hold of the reports on the revision of history textbooks, fragmentary reports that came to him pointed out that committees had more work to do with Serbian and Croatian textbooks than with the Bosniak ones (Moe, 2008, 4).

In May 2004 education ministers agreed to form a committee for the development of a guidelines for history and geography. So, year after in 2005 committee prepared "Guidelines for Writing and Evaluation of History Textbooks for Primary and Secondary Schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina." This guideline was accepted by all ministers of education in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to the guidelines; 1) students should receive a basic understanding of the history and geography of all three constituent peoples and minorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2) Main reference point should be Bosnia and Herzegovina 3) the three constituent peoples and minorities should be represented in a way that doesn't hurt their feelings. One method to achieve this goal was to lower the level of political history in the textbooks. In 2006 all Bosnian education ministers signed this agreement. It was planned that all the proposals listed in guidelines were to be implemented in the new textbooks foreseen for the academic year 2007/2008.

After all these positive changes, in years to come expected success didn't occur. Reform was most successful with the Bosniak textbooks, but with them some other problems occurred. Bosniak textbooks entered into a period of hyperproduction. The biggest advance concerning Croat textbooks was that their publishing started in Bosnia. Serbian textbooks improved visual parts of the textbooks but not much improvement concerning the content occurred. So, problem of the textbooks in Bosnia and Herzegovina still is problem that remains to be solved.

Critical Analysis of History Textbooks

History textbooks is one of the most important topics for the historians in the region. First serious study about the image of the Ottomans in Bosnian textbooks was conducted by Ahmed Alibasić professor at the Faculty of Islamic Studies in Sarajevo. He researched the image of the Ottomans in the history textbooks. Alibasić analyzed textbooks of the three ethnic societies published before 2006. So these textbooks were still in use before the last guidelines were published. My work is the thesis that researches the textbooks that are in use after the 2007, where I tried to find out how much progress was done by bringing textbooks on the level foreseen by the guidelines.

Similar studies on history textbooks were conducted by Damir Agičić (2003) from Croatia who in the same time is writer of some of the history textbooks and Dubravka Stojanović from Serbia (see Pešić and Rosandić, 1994, 77-105). The International Institute that is very active not just in the fields of research but even is part of the textbooks reform in Western Balkans is George Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research from Braunschweig in Germany. OSCE mission in Bosnia relies on their service concerning the education of textbook authors. From international arena especially active researcher and writer in this field is Heike Karge from University of Regensburg.

One of the hardest things while researching the textbooks was the fact that in last years in Bosnia we witness a hypoproduction of the history textbooks which brings the number of textbooks to be researched to a several dozen of them. This is the case especially with Bosniak textbooks which are published by nine publishing houses. Bosniak textbooks are changed almost annually and it became source of money earning. Now we have a situation that publishing houses are lobbying in schools, so their textbooks could enter the curriculum. By doing little changes in the text new textbooks are published almost every year. When it comes to hyperproduction of the textbooks situation with Croat and Serbian textbooks is not as bad as Bosniak ones. Croat textbooks are published by three and Serbian by one publishing house.

But what is bigger problem with Croat and Serbian textbooks is content. After the guidelines were prepared by experts on this issue, little progress was achieved to change nationalistic content of Croat and Serbian textbooks. Only successful point about Croat textbooks is that they are not any more published in Zagreb, but in Bosnia, but content still is not on satisfactory level. When it comes to Serbian textbooks, which probably are the most ethnocentric, also not much progress is achieved. Just visual aspect of the textbooks were improved. When it comes to changing the content of textbooks the most successful are Bosniak history textbooks.

Problem of Approach to the Ottoman Period

Examining image of the Ottoman period in the Bosnia is a vast area by itself which includes many sensitive subtopics that have to be discussed in a very qualitative manner if goal is to get close to real picture about the textbooks issue. Some of the big number of subtopics that must be examined are Islamization process, Devşirme system, Janissary corps, treatment of non-Muslims, Ottoman border wars and the role of Akıncı troops, independence and autonomy movements and so many other topics. In this text particularly, intention was just to summaries overall approach and view of Ottoman period, without dealing with the subtopics already mentioned above. Ottoman period lasted for almost 700 years, so there are many processes and happenings, about which is almost impossible to write in a short text like this one was intended to be.

When reading history textbooks in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is possible to see totally different approaches to Ottoman past between three ethnic groups. Generally speaking Serbian textbooks are the most critical about this period, while Bosniak one are looking more favourably. Survey conducted in Serbian school also proves this view from textbooks. When Ottoman Empire is mentioned two things that first comes to mind of Serbian students is occupier with 49% and enemy with 40% of the answers, compared to Bosniak schools where 66% of students thinks Ottomans were friendly and just 3% see Ottomans as a enemy. As it is said in the guideline, textbooks should focus on a common Bosnian history, but with the Serbian and Croat ones it is not the case. Serbian textbooks are totally focusing on Serbian ethnic history. In the research that was conducted, some questions were examined. One of them was to find out what is the most important historical happening during the Ottoman past. What came out was that even for the Serbian textbooks in Bosnia, that Battle of Kosovo plays crucial role for the Serbian past. Even in a survey conducted 81 % of Serbian kids in Eastern Sarajevo school answered Battle of Kosovo is the most important historical happening for them. Generally in Serbian textbooks Ottoman period is seen as a dark age. One title goes that far to say: "The worst of all periods" (Mihaljčić, 2009, 191). Ottoman Empire is seen as a state designed to be in state of constant war (Ibid., 188). One of the exemptions of the "dark period" is the case of Mehmet Paşa Sokullu, who is seen as a Serb who succeeded in the Empire's hierarchy and became a Grand Vizier.

But is not hard to guess why Sokollu is seen as a one bright example. Because he is a Serb and this goes hand in hand with the overall tone of the textbooks which glorifies the Serbian past. Mehmet Paşa Sokollu plays important role in Serbian history mainly for the reason because he was the the key figure behind the restoration of Pec Patriarchate.

When it comes to Croatian textbooks situation is not much better. Even if Ottomans are not that important part of the Croatian history as they are for Serbs or Bosniaks, they play important role in the Croatian past and the shaping of Croatian identity. Ottoman era for the big part of the Croats starts and finishes earlier then for the Bosniaks or Serbs. Ottoman history is observed from different angle then Bosniak or Serbian ones. Croats for big part of the Ottoman period were on two sides of the border between Ottoman and Habsburg Empires. This aspect plays important role for the formation of Croat perception of Ottoman period. Croatia is seen *Antemurale Christianitatis* which in Latin means bulwark of Christianity. Croat lands are seen as a last resort of Christendom, before the Islamic-Oriental lands starts. In the history textbooks important place is given to the Catholic dimension of Croat identity. Overallly looking this period is not perceived as a positive. When Ottomans are to be blamed for something in many parts of the Croat textbooks, then it is done from the Catholic point of view. For Croat textbooks, Ottomans were preferring Orthodox Serbs rather than Catholics, because Pope was the out of the reach for the Ottomans and was main promoter of the wars against the Ottomans (Bekavac, Kljajic

and Rozic, 2010, 48). For the Croat authors that is the reason why Ottomans preferred the Orthodox Christians even allowed them to collect tax from Catholics and take their churches (Birin, Rozic and Šarlija, 2012, 156-156). There is one picture given in textbooks where Orthodox priest and one Ottoman Muslim are collaborating and behind them is Catholic priest screaming and looking at the burning Catholic church. This picture shows us how Ottoman past is perceived by the Croatian nationalistic historiography. As it is the case with Serbian textbooks, Croat ones are also having main focus on ethnic Croat history, rather than Bosnian history. Bosniak textbooks generally speak positively about the first centuries of Ottoman rule.

Early Ottoman Empire is seen as one of the most advanced and well organized states of that period, which probably is not far from the truth. It is perceived as a civilization that brings city life to the region with sophisticated architecture, art and culture (Petković and Pocrnja, 2010, 124). With Ottoman advance into the Balkans multicultural and multireligious life was introduced. In Bosniak textbooks all these positive aspects of Ottoman civilization are described. Point that is the matter of disagreement between Bosniaks on one side and Serbian and Croat textbooks on the other side is the nature of Islamization. By the Bosniak textbooks this process is seen mainly as a peaceful, which is not supported by the Serbian and Croat textbooks, which look at this process more negatively. In Serbian textbooks it is possible to see a romantic approach to the problem where sometimes phenomena like Devşirme are described as a *Blood Tax* and perceived as an Islamization tool (Petković and Pocrnja, 2010, 189). But this interpretation of the first Ottoman centuries in a positive manner in Bosniak textbooks suddenly starts to shift in the seventeenth century. Fields of disagreement with the Sublime Porte especially extend when reforms were tried to be implemented throughout the Empire. As reforms were opposed in the eighteenth century by the Bosniak elite, textbooks are also defending this point of view. They are full of quotations from the past mainly said by the Husein Kapetan Gradasević which dwarfs Sultan and his reforms (Valenta, 2011, 111). This approach is due to a romanticist and nationalistic approach by some authors in the history textbooks, which actually reveals when writing about the late Ottoman era starts. When Bosniaks became ‘‘endangered’’ by the central Ottoman government, actual approach and intentions in writing the textbooks became clear, which is hard to be observed when writing about the periods when ‘‘everything was allright’’ in Bosnia.

Different Approaches on Reform Period in Ottoman Empire

As it was mentioned above, between three ethnic societies in Bosnia, we have different approaches to Tanzimat reforms. In Bosniak textbooks where about early Ottoman centuries general approach is positive and writing mainly in an objective manner, shift to opposing the Ottoman policy towards Bosnia in the last two centuries starts suddenly. Description of reform period in Bosniak textbooks reminds the tone which is found in Croat and Serbian textbooks about Ottoman period as a whole.

But what is to be seen is that especially in Serbian textbooks, because in Croatia one it is not the important matter of discussion, probably for the reason Croatia was not part of the Empire in those times, is relatively positive approach to reforms. By the Serbian textbooks reforms are seen as a positive wind of change but unsuccessful project, which mainly failed because of the ‘‘domestic Turks’’ who opposed it. When writing about the reforms, Sultan is seen as a positive figure, compared to the local Bosniak Muslims who opposed the idea because they had a fear of losing privileges.

Reason why some Bosniaks at that time were in opposition for reforms is that they thought defence of Bosnia should be in their own hands and that governors sent by Sultan were not that adequate to defend the border province of the Empire. So they were asking for certain level of autonomy. That is the reason why this movement is called Autonomy movement and not the movement for independence of Bosnia. According to (Valenta, 2011) in Bosniak textbooks we can see subjective approach towards the movement and sometimes even exaggeration from the authors where they are giving quotations of Husein Kapetan himself where he tries to downgrade Sultan and his whole army. Romantically Husein is shown as a pious and religious person standing for the idea of Bosnia. This is mainly because of the reason during the war and post war period Bosniak historiography entered into the trap of romanticist interpretation of the past.

Also one of the important periods to examine is the Republican period, Turkish war of independence, Atatürk and his reforms. Relatively important place about this period is given in Croatian textbooks. Generally period that came after the dissolution of the Empire and Atatürk’s fight for Turkish nation state and overall his reforms are accepted as a positive change in Turkish society (Miloš, 2006/07, 46). He is seen as a modernist who introduced modernity and included Turkey into a modern civilized world. Even in Croatia majority schools Turkey is seen relatively as a positive. When students were asked what first comes to their mind when Turkey is mentioned, 46% of the students said Islamist, compared to Serbian students of whom 60% gave this answer, this result in Croatia schools has relatively low percentage. 24% of Croatia students first think of strong country when Turkey is mentioned. Percentage of Croatia students who see Turkey as a friend is 13%, compared to just 4% of Serbian students and very high 51% for Bosniak students who think Turkey is a friend. Croatia students who see Turkey as an enemy country is 14%, compared to 22% of Serbian students and less than 1% for Bosniak students. Similarly with the textbooks, when we look at the results of survey for Bosniak students we see totally different picture concerning Ottoman period and Turkey from the results in Croatia and Serbian schools. But not all about the last periods of the Empire is seen in a positive way in Croatia textbooks. For example in of the Croatia textbook, it is said that Turks committed atrocities of genocide towards Armenians.

Some organizations sponsored by the International Community tried in different

ways to change negative images that are found in the history textbooks. Not just image of Ottoman period is bad, but because of the reason textbooks are divided among the ethnic groups and their national histories, almost everyone who is from other community is target of demonization through the textbooks. Topic of researching the images in the textbooks is not just issue of imagology and political problems of today, but it should deal with the negative historiographical habits which are developing for a very long time and have their roots deeply in the past. Some are chronic problems for a long time and is impossible to explain them just from the aspect of the last war. Even building the negative image of others through teaching history and textbooks today is for big percentage guilty of separational tendencies and hatred among the ethnic societies of Bosnia and Herzegovina. International community understood the necessity of changing negative perceptions, for the sake of keeping Bosnia from the future separations and for the sake of peace. One organization which worked on the educating history teachers is EUROCLIO. What is seen from today's perspective is that all actions done by International Community didn't have deeper impact on the changing textbooks. Bosniak textbooks did the most to implement guidelines, but they finished in unhealthy hyperproduction of history textbooks. Serbian and Croat textbooks didn't change seriously after all these series of guidelines and the efforts of implementing changes.

Regarding Turkey and her role in changing negative image about Ottoman past, not much is done. Turkey should take initiative in this projects. As Turkey is looking forward to build soft power in the region and tries to change negative image about itself, demonizing her past in the textbooks is one of the main obstacles to achieve this goal. Turkey should work with European Union and other International Community organizations on this field very actively.

Center for the Balkans and Black Sea Studies which is part of Yıldız Technical University conducted a work sponsored by governmental institution TÜBİTAK, to explore history textbooks in the Balkans, Black Sea Region, Mediterranean and Caucasian countries (<http://bal-kar.org/>). This project finished successfully and book about the image of the Ottoman period in countries surrounds Turkey is going to be published very soon. Probably there are many more institutions in Turkey that can and should be included to cooperate with the local and international institutions already working on normalizing textbooks in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Otherwise we could have new conflicts in Bosnia, because of building the notion of separate past full of agony and constantly scaring and blaming the others for the horrors of the past to the students, in long terms could lead to dissolution of Bosnia and Herzegovina as we know. Ignoring national and common history is killing the feeling of Bosnian nation and community. To change this much more effort and pushing for reforms must be done, without losing the sensitivity for historical truth. So, with lack of this balance history teaching could finish in another negative extreme of ignoring the facts of the past.

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