

# 12. Nationhood and Imposing Power over Historical Time and Chronology

Özlem Çaykent 

The spine of history is chronology. Although it is almost impossible to think of history without chronology, this in itself can constitute serious problems. Clearly, the choice of events and which of these are to be included or excluded from a chronology can change our perspective of the past—its *chronologies*. Past events are, for example, sometimes arranged in such an order that they form an inevitable teleological progress of history in a certain direction. In other words, what appears to be merely a temporal perspective is in fact presented as a default framework to understand the past.<sup>1</sup> Another problem with chronology is that questions can also be raised about how accurate chronologies are in terms of the actual human experience in the past. Although in the academic world—in the humanities and social sciences in general—we have been thinking about the effects of highlighting progress, the psychological aspects of time, and how we

- \* Some of the ideas elaborated in this paper emerged in a workshop in Istanbul with a group of teachers from Turkey and Armenia where discussions were held about similarities and differences between teaching of history and textbooks in both countries. The full report of the workshop is published in Turkish, English and recently also Armenian. Alişan Akpınar, Sos Avetisyan, Hayk Balasanyan, Fırat Güllü, Işıl Kandolu, Maria Karapetyan, Nvard V. Manasian, Lilit Mkrtychyan, Elif Aköz Özkaya, Garine Palandjian, Ararat Şekeryan and Ömer Turan, *History Education in Schools in Turkey and Armenia: a critique and alternatives*, ed. Bülent Bilmez, Kenan Çayır, Özlem Çaykent et. al. (Istanbul, Yerevan: History Foundation and Imagine Centre for Conflict Transformation, 2017).

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1 See the chapter by Jörn Rüsen in this volume.

narrate time and the problem of periodisation,<sup>2</sup> the implications of these discussions are yet to be seen in secondary school history textbooks. To demonstrate this, I will be looking at the organisation of time and periodisation in history textbooks in use during the 2016–17 academic year in Armenia and Turkey. I argue that these texts provide a *chronologics* that constructs essentialist nationhood. They intrinsically encourage ideas of everlasting, static and state-driven nationhoods.

During the last three decades great efforts have been put into analysing, improving and changing the content, display and language of these textbooks. Besides the more general effort in reforming educational tools all over the world, more specific work is being done as part of a reconciliation or peace building effort in places such as Ireland or Cyprus. The success of these “reforms” is still being assessed.<sup>3</sup> It is certain that the issue of *chronologics* in these textbooks is still an aspect that needs to be scrutinised.

Before proceeding to examples from textbooks, we will take a short look into how time is narrated and how it is compartmentalised in history writing. Human beings experience time in a variety of ways. Its real experience and its representation in a narration, whether this is telling a story to friends or writing a piece of academic research, is profoundly different. Conveying historical phenomena through specific historical sources just adds further layers to these constraints.<sup>4</sup> Historical phenomena can only be encountered and recognized when they appear in historical sources, but these are always already narrations of other narratives of historical encounters. On top of these multiple layers of re-narrations, another is added through the efforts made by historians to understand the historical fact/phenomenon through contextualisation or sometimes de-contextualisation of the narrated event. Narrated events always somehow freeze time into a specific scene. On the other hand, in contrast to narratives of events, real-time happenings have synchronic elements in multiple locations which witness experience through their senses. Capturing these is mostly impossible, but even if information is so captured, for the sake of narrative, historians arrange this multiple dynamic information in a certain order of time of occurrence. Here, the historian puts things into a certain order, chooses what is important, what

- 2 A few examples are David Carr, *Time, Narrative and History* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1981); Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990); Robert Levine, *A Geography of Time* (New York: Basic Books, 1997); Ari Helo, “Breaking Away from Progressive History: The Past and Politics in American Studies,” *European Journal of American studies* [online], 9, no. 1 (2014), <https://doi.org/10.4000/ejas.10263>; Elizabeth A. R. Brown, “The Tyranny of a Construct: Feudalism and Historians of Medieval Europe,” *The American Historical Review* 79, no. 4 (Oct. 1974): 1063–1088.
- 3 Akpınar et al., *History Education in Schools* (see note 1); Philip Gamaghelyan, “Armenia,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Conflict and History Education in the Post-Cold War Era*, ed. Luigi Cajani, Simone Lässig, and Maria Repoussi (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 69–80.
- 4 Carr, *Time, Narrative and History* (see note 2), 3. In this volume, Jörn Rüsen is also proposing a list of typologies for ordering time that are used in historical thinking.

is worth mentioning, and thus decides on how this might have revealed itself to historical actors and thus composes a specific *chronologies*. Nowadays, research and thought on the organisation, conceptualization and perception of time shows that it may be intrinsically related to anthropological, psychological and ideological meanings as well as narrative compounds.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, if closely inspected, *chronologies* can disclose cultural and ideological leanings and thus produce progressive, nationalistic, Eurocentric or simply state-oriented histories. One problem of the understanding of time in historical narratives is that it only appears to be an ‘objective’ measurement.

Fernand Braudel had already pointed out that there are multiple historical times that flow at different velocities and generate concurrent multiple layers of time. One of these is the *longue durée*, seen on a geographical level, then there is the social level of conjuncture—the *moyenne durée*—and lastly, there is the political level of time, the *événement*, and the *courte durée*.<sup>6</sup> Can there actually be something like a “natural” understanding of chronology or time or is it always knowledge *a posteriori*? What is the role of education in this learning process? To recognise the plurality of temporalities is a complex understanding and a relatively recent one, too. In this understanding, the experience of time and its conceptualization is shown to be culturally, locally and even individually shaped and determined. Nevertheless, however culturally bounded these historical narratives may be, they create an idea of ‘objective chronology’: the ideas of time and periodisation used by early and medieval Christian scholars like St Paul, St. Augustine (354–430), or the Islamic historian Muhammed bin Cerîr Taberi (839–923), are good examples.<sup>7</sup> In their works, we find ‘universal and objective’ descriptions as embedded in religious books. Taberi (839–923) starts his universal history with the description of time in accordance with the narrative of God’s creation of the universe. Interestingly, however, he conceptualises time as the creation of light and space. According to him, God first created light and then the universe as space came into being. As a consequence, Taberi’s introduction of time, commonly accepted by all believers, offers an objective and universal foundation to temporality and thus prescribes its own historical storyline.<sup>8</sup> Although historical data are quite weak in such a

5 See Robert Levine, *A Geography of Time: The Temporal Misadventures of a Social psychologist, or How Every Culture Keeps Time Just a Little Bit Differently* (New York: Basic Books, 1997). Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, 3, 14, 65.

6 F. Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*. 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). For *longue durée* and *moyenne durée* see vol. 1, 25–276, and vol. 2, part 2, 657–903; *événement*, vol 2, 904–1237.

7 In the Islamic tradition the problematisation of time is complicated as it includes different concepts for different types of time as in the distinction between *dahr* (time from the beginning to its end) and *asr* (a span of time). Gerhard Böwering, “The Concept of Time in Islam.” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 141, no. 1 (1997): 58–59.

8 Tarik Al-Rusul Wa-l Muluk Al Taberi, *The History of Al-Taberi: An Annotated Translation*, vol. 1 (New York: State University of New York), 172–187; for further Islamic examples of periodisation,

metanarrative, religious literature gives us understandable answers to very complicated phenomenon. It is evident that human beings may have had one or another kind of awareness of the historical past, as David Carr explains, “in a naïve and prescientific way the historical past is there for all of us, ... it figures in our ordinary view of things whether we are historians or not.”<sup>9</sup>

In addition, the idea that time has a specific purpose is an idea that persists from ancient times to modernity. The development towards this purpose is expounded in an uninterrupted process of chronologies interrelated by cause and effect. The tenacity in writing a history unfolding God’s plan, or the ending of history in Hegelian or Marxist interpretations are not the only examples. Likewise, nationalist history writing provides a wide-ranging exemplar. As a matter of fact, national histories with chronologies that emphasise an evolution “from nations to statehood” play a key part. Regarding their scientific stance, a great deal of such histories is accompanied by an emphasis on archival precision and objectivity. The middle and high school textbooks in Turkey and Armenia provide many such examples.

Although there might be other courses in which historical topics come up, generally the study of history as a separate discipline-based course begins, both in Armenia and Turkey with secondary education (grades 6–12). In Turkey there are two different types of history courses; the first is a general “History” course, of which only 1/3 deals with non-Turkish/Ottoman History; the second is focused on “the Revolutions of the Republic of Turkey and Atatürkism,” dealing with the formation of the modern Turkish Republic and the ensuing social and political reforms. Only in 11th grade are students offered some elective courses such as “Contemporary Turkish and World History.” In Armenia, however, the courses are devised as “World History” and “Armenian History.” To facilitate a comparative approach, in the following discussion I will deal only with “Turkish History” and its corresponding textbook (2016–2017) on “Armenian History.”<sup>10</sup>

One of the striking issues in these textbooks is the problem of periodisation. There is a general partition of periods relating to ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary, and then the more specific periods are named after states and rulers of the relevant nation which is founded on a *chronologics*, which will be addressed below. The major

see Abu Rayhan Al-Biruni, *The Chronology of Ancient Nations*, trans. Eduard Sachau (London: Oriental Translations Fund, 1879), 16.

9 Carr, *Time, Narrative and History* (see note 2), 3.

10 These textbooks were in use in schools during the academic year 2016–17, in which this research was undertaken. These are state-sponsored books used at public schools. Both in Armenia and Turkey there are general rules and standards published by the government regulating textbook contents. In Turkey, book production is mostly monitored and approved by the Ministry of Education. Likewise, in Armenia, there is an approval necessary, but the production of textbooks is left to local private publishing companies. See for further details Akpınar et al., *History Education in Schools* (see note 1), 16–22 and 46–51.

period divisions are partitioned in accordance with specific school grades. In Armenian textbooks (published in 2013), the oldest and old periods correspond to sixth grade history courses, the middle ages to the seventh grade, the ‘new’ (equivalent of early modern) period to eighth grade, and the modern period to ninth grade which then are periodised alternatively according to emerging states or rulers in Armenian lands such as the Period of Tigranes the Great (95–55 BC) [Տիգրանի Մեծ], an important period for the Armenian state as it had expanded to its largest land borders.<sup>11</sup> However, upon closer scrutiny, it is also apparent that the textbooks in Armenia have been for decades mostly shaped by the Marxist theory of history in stages that starts with slavery and feudalism evolving to modern society over time. In the sixth grade textbook (2013), the stages include the emergence of the nation a transformation from slavery to feudalism described as a “natural development of the Armenian feudalism.”<sup>12</sup> In a summary work on History Education in Armenia, we find this statement: “Even though there has been a gradual ousting of Marxist ideology from the system of education after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the syllabi and textbooks still largely use that conceptualization of human time adding to it a layer of nationalism.”<sup>13</sup>

Turkish textbooks use similar periodisation schemes, resting on state names. The ninth grade history textbook (2016) that covers the period from early civilisations until the fourteenth century starts with an introduction to the rise of civilisation that introduces the terms “pre-historical age” and “historical age” (Tarih Öncesi Çağlar ve Tarih Çağları).<sup>14</sup> These are followed by periods that are titled after the various early Turkic states [İlk Türk Devletleri].<sup>15</sup> The tenth grade textbook (2016) follows the chronological order of successive Turkic states, starting with the transformation of Ottoman rule from a principality to a state [Beylikten Devlete] until its demise in the early twentieth century. Although this set of textbooks is not using the word “period” and uses centuries as titles as in “The Ottoman State at the Beginning of the twentieth century” [20. Yüzyıl Başında Osmanlı Devleti], an underlying attempt to periodise, based on particular states and rulers can still be seen.<sup>16</sup> For instance, in the tenth grade textbook (2016) there are several periods labelled in accordance with the Ottoman Sultans such as the I. Selim [I. Selim (Yavuz) Dönemi (1512–1520)]<sup>17</sup> of the Kanuni Period [Kanuni Dönemi (1520–1566)].<sup>18</sup>

11 Section “Tigranes the Great” [Տիգրանի Մեծ] in Babken Harutyunyan, Vladimir Barkhudaryan, Igit Gharibyan, and Petros Hovhannisyanyan, *Armenian History: Ancient and Old Period: Grade 6 Textbook* [Հայոց պատմություն. 6-րդ դասարան / Hayots’ patmut’yun. 6-rd dasaran] (Yerevan: Manmar, 2013), 146–147 and 85–92.

12 Harutyunyan et al. *Armenian History: Grade 6* (see note 11).

13 Akpınar et al. *History Education in Schools* (see note 1), 90.

14 Behçet Önder, *History: Grade 9 [Tarih 9]* (Ankara: Biryay, 2016), 51–81.

15 Önder, *History, 9* (see note 14), 82–117.

16 Sami Tüysüz, *Tarih 10 [History 10]* (Ankara: Tuna Matbaacılık, 2016), 196.

17 Tüysüz, *Tarih 10* (see note 16), 68–77.

18 Tüysüz, *Tarih 10* (see note 16), 78–92.

The analysis of the general content of these textbooks reveals a great deal about contemporary political conceptions of what the history of great nations should be. Here, the focus will be on the chronological aspects of these contents. The Armenian history textbooks do not have a full section on chronology. Only at the end of the sixth grade *World History* textbook (2013), there is a timeline of the development of “Civilizations [քաղաքակրթություններ / k'aghak'akrt'ut'yunner].”<sup>19</sup> In the Turkish ninth grade textbook (2016), on the other hand, there is a “First Unit: The Science of History” [I. Ünite Tarih Bilimi] with a section on “The Introduction to Science of History,” and on “Time and Calendars in History” [Tarih Bilimine Giriş, Tarihte Zaman ve Takvim]. Here “objectivity” as well as techniques of historical thinking are discussed within the confines of classical historicism. It is explained that historical science is based on historical sources and causality through which social facts and relations are revealed.<sup>20</sup> It singles out causality and points that “the most important requirement of the science of history,” is “to investigate the cause and effect relationship within a certain place and timespan.”<sup>21</sup> The students are encouraged to think about continuities between the past and present. While tracing these, it is pointed out that every historical fact has to be dealt with within its own context and period. The textbook makes use of problematisations of ‘historical fact’ and the ‘nature of historical inquiry’ and there is also a paragraph on the relationship between the historian and objectivity. However, when historical method is explained, a certain stress on ‘objectivity’ still persists.<sup>22</sup> A definition of chronology is given within this first section on the tools of history. Accordingly, chronology “is also called the science of time, it assists history by sorting events correctly by time.”<sup>23</sup>

As can be seen, these are very generic definitions of chronology, time and history, they mostly do not mention possible difficulties or discrepancies. Questions of diachronicity and synchronicity are not raised. The idea that periodisations are locally and culturally determined is not addressed, instead, the textbooks simply confirm that chronological sequencing must be accepted as a default. An explanation such as “In order to understand the concept of time we have to know the meaning of the words ‘before’ (*önce*), ‘after’ (*sonra*) and ‘now’ (*şimdi*) and use them correctly within a sentence,”<sup>24</sup> refers to the *logos* of cause and effect as well as a linearity of historical narrative that evolves in a sequence. In general, one can say that although the textbooks

19 Harutyunyan et al. *Armenian History: Grade 6* (see note 11), 152–53.

20 Önder, *History: 9* (see note 14), 12. “History is a science that examines the past activities of human societies (religious, political, commercial, social, etc.) and their relations with each other based on documents in a cause-effect relationship, showing place and time.”

21 Önder, *History: 9* (see note 14), 14.

22 Önder, *History: 9* (see note 14), 17–18.

23 Önder, *History: 9* (see note 14), 20.

24 Önder, *History: 9* (see note 14), 20.

have been repeatedly revised within the last decade, they still communicate quite a nominalist as well as a positivist understanding of history.

To gain a more general grasp and a comparative perspective about widespread patterns in the *chronologies* of history teaching at secondary school level – though not specifically for Armenia and Turkey – a short glance at the abundance of history course materials for teachers on the internet may be sufficient. The internet is indeed a rich domain where educational aids can be found, and detailed general lesson plans are given for the “Introduction to history” lessons.<sup>25</sup> Evidently, the lessons start with the idea of time, chronology, and what history is. They start with explaining chronology: “the word chronology is made from two Greek words—*chronos* meaning time and *logos* (discourse or reasoning/working out).”<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, it is explained that giving a *logos* to time is like giving an order to time. This is accompanied with activities where students learn about the linear flow of time and how to construct chronological timelines. The aim is to amplify the understanding of chronological reasoning, causes and effects. The basic learning outcomes of this lesson are listed as:

- To understand the meaning of the historical term—chronology.
- To understand that the word chronology as derived from the Greek words *chronos* and *logos*.
- To be able to put times and dates into chronological order.
- To see that a timeline is a chronology of dates and events.
- To understand that a timeline is useful to give an overview of a historical period.<sup>27</sup>

Clearly, courses consist not only of textbooks or online teaching materials. In the attempt to understand secondary school education, one must keep in mind that in-class lectures, internet sources and the social environment are important parts of learning.<sup>28</sup> Thus, even though there is not a detailed section given for the definition of chronology, history teachers both from Armenia and Turkey affirm that they spend some time in class explaining what chronology and history is, in a very similar fashion

25 Most of these lesson plans are in English and are not specifically addressed to a specific national history course. “Chronology—Lesson Plan.” Last modified November 2000, <https://www.historyonthenet.com/chronology-lesson-plan/>

26 “Chronology—Lesson Plan” (see note 25).

27 “Chronology—Lesson Plan” (see note 25).

28 Anahit Hakobyan, “State Propaganda Through Public Education: Armenia and Azerbaijan,” *Journal of Conflict Transformation Caucasus Edition* (April 2016): 3. Accessed December 4, 2019, <https://caucasusedition.net/analysis/state-propaganda-through-public-education-armenia-and-azerbaijan/>; Garine Palandjian, “The ABCs of Being Armenian: (Re)Turning to the National Identity in Post-Soviet Textbooks,” in *Reconstructing Memory: School Textbooks and the Imagination of the Nation*, ed. James Williams (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2014), 247–267.

to the example given above. When teachers were asked whether this was necessary, they answered in the affirmative: according to them, “students do not have a sense of chronology.”<sup>29</sup> The short survey affirmed the scholarship on the development of the notion of time among children.<sup>30</sup> Namely, there is a problem of vagueness and relativeness of the concept of time or simply the lack of understanding of historical time as a concept for these students. The teachers were referring to the fact that the development of *chronological* and historical understanding is a process of learning. Their point was to deepen notions of the temporal and the understanding of historic time. They referred to the lack of knowledge of the timeline of civilisations, or even that of the history of their own nation. In fact, theirs is a classical pedagogic stance: an understanding of chronology is the foundation for comprehending historical time.<sup>31</sup> This understanding of teaching students about chronology and “development,” thus establishing “a sense of sequence, of the order in which events occur and of their relation one to another,” is perceived as essential among pedagogists and teachers.<sup>32</sup> More recent research, on the other hand, shows that children develop a sense of time, more specifically historic time, at a much earlier age.<sup>33</sup> If this is right, this leaves us with the question of how high school history courses remodel students’ understanding of historical time.

- 29 The following observations are based on a short interview with Turkish teachers in Istanbul, about how chronology is taught in class. Maria Karapetyan and Lilit Mkrtchyan assisted me with the same survey in Armenia. The questions were addressed to teachers (12) who participated in a joint project between the History Foundation and Imagine Center for Conflict Transformation on Turkish and Armenian textbooks funded by Hrant Dink Foundation the Programme *Support to the Armenia-Turkey Normalisation Process: Stage Two*, financed by the European Union and the Heinrich Böll Stiftung in Istanbul. Maria Karapetyan and Lilit Mkrtchyan “Chronology,” email, November 9, 2017.
- 30 There has been a great deal of research done on the development of the notion of time among children. The approaches vary from a more normative standpoint to a more pluralistic methodology. Just to mention a few: Jean Piaget, *Le développement de la notion de temps chez l'enfant* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1946); Marjan J. De Groot-Reuvekamp, Carla Van Boxtel, Anje Ros, and Penelope Harnett, “The Understanding of Historical Time in the Primary History Curriculum in England and the Netherlands,” *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 46, no. 4 (2014): 487–514; Stephen J. Thornton and Ronald Vukelich, “Effects of Children’s Understanding of Time Concepts on Historical Understanding: Theory & Research in Social Education,” 16, no. 1 (1988): 69–82.
- 31 Jean Piaget’s *Développement de la Notion de Temps* (see note 30) can be given as an example of such a classical stance.
- 32 Ralph A. Brown and Marian R. Brown, “Time and Chronology in the Social Studies,” *The School Review* 62, no. 6 (1954): 341–345, here at 341.
- 33 For studies on children’s understanding of time, see Thornton and Vukelich, “Effects of Children’s Understanding of Time,” (see note 30), 69–82. Elizabeth R. Hinde and Nancy Perry, “Elementary Teachers’ Application of Jean Piaget’s Theories of Cognitive Development during Social Studies Curriculum Debates in Arizona,” *The Elementary School Journal* 108, no. 1 (2007): 63–79.

Concurrently, students gain little critical skills in relation to what *chronologics* is or how perceptions of historical time are embedded within specific narrative structures. In particular, the textbooks under scrutiny here are great examples of how—through the method of emplotment—a ‘simple’ chronological factual display of events can be turned into a highly opinionated and nationalist discourse.<sup>34</sup> There is a strong dramatic arc within the narrative presented as a relationship between cause and effect: within a simple storytelling sequence of a beginning, a middle, and an end. Consequently, the presentation of an ‘objective history’ in a certain chronological order deploys a tale with the basics of a plot with a main character, namely the people and their state, which is presented as their natural equivalent. The progressive line reveals itself through the state’s increasing sophistication over time, which is supported with some hero-like leaders. The next essential part of the plot is the dialectic between tension and release with an escalating problem (like riots, wars, and conquests), that leads to either victory or the loss of the state. The decline of states or of a nation is almost always caused by treachery, corruption or spoilage of the good classical institutions, or by enemy conquest. It is noteworthy, then, that these histories are almost exclusively focused on the state.

In the following, I will deliberate in more detail on how the use of a specific chronology, contributes to this particular reading of history. I will show first, that the textbooks provide a single diachronic chronology of a single nation, either Turkish or Armenian, where groups or ethnicities other than the majority of the nation are hardly mentioned. This, in particular, creates a single-voiced narrative where other groups within the same territory or geography are either excluded or silenced. For instance, in one Turkish ninth grade textbook (2016) the main themes are a general short introduction to concepts of history, a short “History of Civilizations” followed by the history of the Turkish state from mid-Asia to their arrival in Anatolia, the “Rise of Islam,” finishing with the rise of the Ottoman state.<sup>35</sup> However, the peoples living in Anatolia before the Turks arrive are either not mentioned or they are just described generally as Byzantines or Christians.<sup>36</sup> Likewise, in the tenth grade history book (2016) which deals with the Ottoman Period, there is no mention of Kurds, Alevi, the Assyrian Community or other non-orthodox Muslims. Certainly, there is little distinction made between the various non-Muslim communities.<sup>37</sup> The co-existence of

34 Sedat Çalıřkan, “10. Sınıf Tarih Ders Kitabında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nun Kuruluşuna Eleştirel Bir Bakış Denemesi / [A Critical Perspective on the Foundation of the Ottoman Empire in Tenth Grade History Textbooks], *KÜLLİYAT Osmanlı Arařtırmaları Dergisi* (2018): 46–54.

35 Chapters such as “History of Science” [Tarih Bilimi], “Birth of Civilization and First Civilizations” [Uygarlıđın Doğulu ve İlk Uygarlıklar], “First Turkic States” [İlk Türk Devletleri] in Önder, *History: Grade 9* (see note 14).

36 Önder, *History: Grade 9* (see note 14), 19, 103, 112, 113.

37 Tüysüz, *Tarih 10 [History 10]* (see note 16).

non-Muslims with Muslim Ottomans is a “Convivencia,” that is, within the Ottoman system of tolerance different religious, ethnic and cultural groups lived in harmonious peace. Accordingly, although the state had the power to diminish and convert each subject in the newly conquered regions, it continued the policy of toleration. In a short reading box entitled “The Ottoman Empire: the fortress of justice and tolerance” the textbook explains:

Even during its most powerful period when the Ottoman Empire ruled three continents, the state was far from a missionary or even colonial mentality and has never interfered in issues of faith and religion. In fact, there was no need to pretend to be well-intentioned or for any clandestine activity. Since, for this most magnificent state on earth it would have sufficed to simply say “you have to convert to Islam, or you will die” to win the whole non-Muslims subjects over.<sup>38</sup>

Instead, after the Battle of Manzikert (1071) when the Turks started their conquests in Anatolia, the Byzantines, who had been suffering under the heavy taxes of the state, had been looking forward to a new and just administration. It is told that they were content under the tolerant and just system of the Turkish state, as a consequence they showed complete loyalty and served the new state (Anatolian Seljukite State [1075–1308]).<sup>39</sup> Likewise, during the Seljukite era, the textbook explains, the Armenians were happy when the Turks conquered the Edessa/Urfa region (1086–1087) since the Turks respected their property, religion and let them live peacefully under their administration.<sup>40</sup> Thus, tolerance is a major leitmotif that assists in creating, as Jörn Rüsen would put it, a “meaningful sequence”<sup>41</sup> throughout the ages, for the Ottomans and concurrently it is the unchanging nature of Turkish culture, a type of narrative that he has categorised as “traditional.”<sup>42</sup>

In this tenth grade book (2016) narrative, the perfect tolerance system breaks down only after the non-orthodox Muslims, or non-Muslim Ottomans, start to disturb the

38 This short reading box quotes a *scholarly* history article. Tüysüz, *Tarih 10 [History 10]* (see note 16), 27.

39 Önder, *History: Grade 9* (see note 14), 188, quoted in Akpınar et al., *History Education in Schools* (see note 1), 23.

40 Önder, *History: Grade 9* (see note 14), 205, quoted in Akpınar et al., *History Education in Schools* (see note 1), 24.

41 Cf. the typology provided in the essay by Rüsen in this volume.

42 Tüysüz, *Tarih 10 [History 10]* (see note 16), 27. Besides being an underlying sign of continuity in the chronology of Turkish History, this same aspect can also be read as setting a contrast to what the “enemy” is not. See on “enemy” constructions in textbooks and media for example Hakobyan, “State Propaganda,” (see note 29),” and Katalin Morgan, “Stereotypes, Prejudices, Self and ‘the Other’ in History Textbooks,” *Yesterday & Today* 7 (July, 2012): 85–100.

balance, or challenge the status quo and collaborate with enemies, against the Turkish/Ottoman state. In the nineteenth century the Armenian and the Greek-Orthodox Ottomans, for instance, so the narrative goes, were influenced by western propaganda, and especially the infusion of nationalist ideas to the individual ethnic and religious groups in the Ottoman Empire. They established secret societies and “separatist gangs,” *traitorously* allying with the enemies against the Ottoman Empire, like the Greek and Armenians cooperating with the Russians.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, the Ottomans are assumed to be only Sunni from the beginning. The adapted linear chronology imposes a narrative where synchronic existences, such as the parallel occurrence of the Shia and Sunni Muslim worlds in the Ottoman Empire, or the growth of Sunni emphasis after the sixteenth century conquests in the Arab lands are not explained. If there is any mention of the Shiites, then it is because of the political rivalries between the Safavids and the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century. Shia is mentioned here just as a means of Shah Ismail’s (1501–1524) intrigue to infiltrate into the Ottoman Empire.<sup>44</sup> They appear only as peripheral matters. As a result, other people’s voices are either barely heard or they are instrumentalised to show the superiority of the Turks or the debauched intentions of the Other. Also, in the Armenian textbooks, the distinction between the nation, states and the region these dwell on are distinguished. As a result, although there is not a distinctive hostile rhetoric in the Armenian textbooks, non-Armenian groups such as Muslim populations or even non-Gregorian Armenians within Armenian states are not present.

This state-oriented chronology is an important characteristic in both Turkish and Armenian textbooks, along with a notion of an ever-existing nation. For instance, in the section on the “Science of History” of the *History Grade 10* (2016), the Turkish textbook explains how history is a continuum of events. The emphasis on continuity naturally connects to the topic of the nation as unchanging, homogenous and state-oriented.<sup>45</sup> In the textbooks, this continuum begins with the ethno-genesis of the Turkic and Armenian nations in Asia and the Armenian highlands of Anatolia respectively and continues throughout the various states built by these nations.<sup>46</sup> This narrative

43 For the Greek riots before the First World War, see Tüysüz, *Tarih 10 [History 10]* (see note 16), 163. For Armenian committees causing upheaval and killing innocents from 1890 until 1909 see Tüysüz, *Tarih 10 [History 10]*, (see note 16), 178, quoted in Akpınar et al., *History Education in Schools* (see note 1), 24.

44 Tüysüz, *Tarih 10 [History 10]* (see note 16), 68.

45 Although there have been reforms in 2009 regarding equal rights, like the use of mother tongues, for ethnic and religious groups like the Romans, Assyrians, Armenians or Alevi there has not been any change introduced into the textbooks. The discourse in them are still that Turkey is homogenous, its language is Turkish, and its religion seem to be single. 2014. Kenan Çayır, *Who Are We? Identity, Citizenship and Rights in Turkey's Textbooks* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı 2015), 114–115.

46 See ninth grade history chapter on “The meaning of the name Turk and its Importance” (Türk Adının Anlamı ve Önemi) in Önder, *History: Grade 9* (see note 14), 83–84 and see The

envisions events as part of a single temporal continuum with causal connections and history as a development through a unified and logical process. The conceptualization of the nation in these textbooks is based on an essentialist and historicist narrative that links the ancient past immediately and directly to the present. It offers a line along which the ancient and perpetual Turkish or Armenian nation exists, unchanged in time—the only changing elements here are the institutions in which these nations exist.

Typically, the notion of the chronology of Armenian history starts with the legendary foundation of the Armenians with Hayk the Great, thus with a semi-legendary beginning the first Armenian state/city and the self-designation (*hay*) of the Armenians as a nation was established. This aspect is amplified by statements like “Armenians are the only indigenous Indo-European people who are formed in their pre-patria, never left it and have survived till nowadays,” as found in a textbook of Armenian History published in 2013.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, in a tenth grade textbook published a year later, it states that characteristics like “love of freedom” [ազատության սերը/*azatut'yan sery*] is tantamount to a timeless description of the Armenian nation. Again, the persistent continuity in the chronology of the Armenian nation is underlined: “The absolute understanding of the freedom of the nation that was established in times immemorial is perpetual among our ancestors and reaches our days transmitted through blood.”<sup>48</sup>

Whether the nation is made of tolerance or love for freedom, the use of the concept of nation in both of these textbook sets is clearly following a modernist trajectory. While the emphasis on these two characteristics is greatly relevant to the construction of nation building memories, both for Turkish and for Armenian identities, in the Armenian textbook we sense an ongoing strife for national liberation, comparable to other nineteenth and twentieth century nation-state-building processes. One could say, then, that the modern idea of *nation* travels freely back and forth in time along this chronological line.<sup>49</sup> Both in the Turkish and Armenian textbooks, a great many examples of uprisings and wars are given, highlighting the perpetual existence of a national consciousness and a strong sense of freedom or the struggle for national liberation. The shift between a tribe and a state happens quickly, never questioning this transformation. Chronological evolution leads naturally from tribe to states and finally to the desired end, namely the nation-state. In short, the narrative

Grade 10 chapter on “The Genealogy of Armenians” in *Armenian History: Grade 10 Textbook* [ՀԱՅՈՑ ՊԱՏՄՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ 10–րդ դասարան/ Hayots' Patmut'yun 10 rd Dasaran], ed. Ashot Melkonyan, Hayk Avetsiyan, Artak Movsisyan, Petros Hovhannisyan and Eduard Danielyan (Yerevan: Zangak, 2014), 27.

47 Harutyunyan et al., *Armenian History: Grade 6*, 32 quoted in Akpınar et al., *History Education in Schools* (see note 1), 53.

48 Melkonyan et al., *Armenian History: Grade 10 Textbook* (see note 47), 161, quoted in Akpınar et al., *History Education in Schools* (see note 1), 53.

49 Akpınar et al., *History Education in Schools* (see note 1), 51.

always evolves around the plot of state building. Even at times when a state does not exist, one has the feeling that this is but a preparatory era before a new evolution into another statehood.<sup>50</sup>

As a result, the important historical data chosen in the textbooks are generally those from political history, such as wars. In the Turkish example, where there is no geographical continuity between the first states in Asia and the final Turkish Republic in Anatolia, the shift from one location/geography to the other is explained with continuous heroic wars or stories of conquest from Central Asia to Anatolia. The bulk of the history of the Turks starts, however, after the conversion to Islam.<sup>51</sup> The chronology simply follows the Turks travelling in different geographies and establishing their new states. Thus, the whole story starts with the nation/tribe. As it grows, it forms states, enemies emerge, and uprisings start, these are subverted, or the Turkish state declines and the cycle starts anew and so on, until the final formation of the independent nation-state. Interestingly, all the different regions inhabited throughout this process are mentioned as father/motherlands.

The history, chronology and periodisation of the Armenian nation in these textbooks is built on a single linear chronology, lacking any synchronic elements. At the same time, Armenian history is viewed through the lens of state-building as a sequence which links historical states with the modern Republic of Armenia. An example of such sequencing is the case where the establishment of a local authority in Van, established near the eastern borders of the Ottoman Empire in 1915, is described as a “precursor of the restored Armenian independence three years later” in the territory of modern-day Armenia.<sup>52</sup> Although the geographical shifts in Armenian history are not as dispersed as in the Turkish example, there is a sequencing of events revealing what Jörn Rüsen calls a “temporal orientation”<sup>53</sup> in narrating the history of the Armenian people on their way to becoming an independent modern nation state. Lastly, it is also remarkable, that, although this empire was a distinctly multi-ethnic one, there is little mention of any of the other peoples.

50 See how this becomes a safeguard of identity in Marc Ferro, *The Use and Abuse of History: Or How the Past is Taught to Children* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 217, 209–244.

51 In a recent syllabus, half of the term is assigned for discussions on history and time; first the era of human civilisations and the Middle Ages, the next half of the course is allocated to the history of Turks: *Ortaöğretim Tarih Dersi (9,10, 11 Sınıflar), Öğretim Programı*, Ministry of Education, 2018, accessed January 2, 2020, <http://mufredat.meb.gov.tr/Dosyalar/201822142524139-Tarih%20döp.pdf>.

52 Ashot Melkonyan, Vladimir Barkhudaryan, Gagik Harutyunyan, Pavel Chobanyan, Aram Simonyan, and Aram Nazaryan, ed., *Armenian History: Grade 11 Textbook* [ՀԱՅՈՑ ՊԱՏՄՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԻ 11-րդ դասարանի չափագր / Hayots' Patmut'yun 11 rd Dasarani Hamar] (Yerevan: Zangak, 2015), 261, quoted in Akpınar et al., *History Education in Schools* (see note 1), 52.

53 Cf. Jörn Rüsen in this volume, 17.

History and chronology thus provide nationalism with a certain notion of Self and Other, one that the textbook projects discussed here exploit freely. Whether constructed with a Marxist theory of the stages of history, or linear progressive interpretations, the main actor of history, i.e. the Self/nation—in its modern shape and definition—is represented as an eternal entity. It penetrates all epochs, even those when statehood as such did not exist and it often reduces an Empire to a single nation. The organisation of time in this reductionist manner creates an essentialist image in students' memories, stigmatising and thus omitting the fact that some of the social formations in the past, that are now described as statist or national, had indeed different historical grounds of identity formation, sometimes based on religion and at other times based on other patrimonial ties. David Carr argues that “our only real connection to the historical past is the result of ‘historical inquiry,’ whether it is ours or by others.”<sup>54</sup> Understanding historical facts always entails contextualisation or de-contextualisation which in turn freezes time to an assigned logical frame. Whereas real-time events have many synchronic elements in multiple locations, for the sake of creating a chronological narrative, the textbook historians we have seen at work in this chapter put this multiple dynamic information into an order where most of these synchronic elements are lost. The organisation of time itself fails to acknowledge that there are many ways of conceptualising time, and that there is nothing universal about it.

Revisions in the textbooks are almost always on the table, both in Armenia and Turkey. In Armenia discussions started in July 2020 as part of the education reform focused on the revision of the state guidelines for textbook production. In Turkey revisions were made in 2017. In the Turkish case, the textbook writers, and Textbook Committee at the Ministry of National Education at work in recent years have seen the antidote to a single-linear chronological narrative in a thematic approach. Fırat Güllü, a history teacher in Turkey, in a short essay assesses the 2017 revisions in Textbooks analysing the thematic approach and their stance towards Atatürkism. According to him, the revised textbooks introduce, next to a shift to a more thematic approach, a new epochal label, the *kadim*. *Kadim* is a vague term that could mean ‘old,’ ‘ancient’ but also ‘immemorial.’ As an epochal label, it is separated into a Turkish, a Muslim, and a global section for humanity in general. It appears that this is an attempt to avoid Eurocentric periodisation schemes. Reminding the readers that the history program dwells mostly on Turkish-Muslim topics, Güllü warns that the shift to a thematic approach will only deepen anachronistic ways of thinking and thus will end up with a very localised understanding of history. And indeed, after the first draft of this revised textbook came out, the discussions in fact revealed an unquestioned and

54 Carr, *Time, Narrative and History* (see note 2), 2.

fixed narrative based on “Turkish-Islamic values.”<sup>55</sup> While the revisions to history textbooks will continue, even the move away from the use of *Eurochronologies* can, as Güllü’s warning indicates, lead to the production of parochial and narrowly localised versions of history.

## Conclusions

The Ministries of Education in Turkey and Armenia are the institutions that define the aims of history courses as they approve the textbooks in use. Both institutions have similar aims related to the “making of a nation”: textbooks should teach and reinforce unity and harmony, as well as national and state interests.<sup>56</sup> The most recent “standard history syllabus” published by the Turkish Ministry of Education for the academic year of 2019–20, states, for example, that the ninth grade history course dwell on “The role of common memory in identity formation and socialization.”<sup>57</sup> These aims themselves should be sufficient to question again history courses and their teachings, both in Armenia and Turkey. This “again” needs to be underlined: there is, indeed, a continuous endeavour to amend, revise and change school textbooks in terms of method, content and language.<sup>58</sup> While both students and teachers want these books to become more creative in the ways they present historical data and encourage critical approaches, this remains a sensitive issue.

This short overview has illustrated how the linear chronological presentation of historical data, by narrating in a sequence of constructed continuity and progress, the history of nations and their states, fail to provide insights into some of the more dynamic, multifaceted, and transnationally connected aspects of history. While both Turkish and Armenian history curricula recently point out that one of the aims of history course is to make students analyse sources, to increase their ability for critical thinking and to train their problem-solving skills,<sup>59</sup> these textbooks in fact achieve

55 Firat Güllü, “Yeni Tarih Müfredatı Üzerine bir Değerlendirme,” [An Assessment of the New History Curriculum] *Toplumsal Tarih* 278 (2017), 32–35.

56 For detailed descriptions and state standards both in Turkey and Armenia see Akpınar et al., *History Education in Schools* (see note 1), 16–22 and 46–51.

57 *Ortaöğretim Tarih Dersi* (see note 51).

58 İbrahim H. Öztürk, “Curriculum Reform and Teacher Autonomy in Turkey: The Case of the History Teaching,” *International Journal of Instruction* 4 (2011): 113–128; Hercules Millas, “History Textbooks in Greece and Turkey,” *History Workshop*, no. 31 (1991): 21–33; Ali Yıldırım, “High School Textbooks in Turkey from Teachers’ and Student’s Perspectives: The Case of History Textbooks,” *Asia Pacific Education Review* 7 (2006): 218–228.

59 Firat Güllü, “Yeni Tarih Müfredatı Üzerine bir Değerlendirme,” [An Assessment of the New History Curriculum] *Toplumsal Tarih* 278 (2017), 32.

only very little of all this. While in 2006, research on high school textbooks would have indicated that there was an imminent demand for “adapting an appropriate scope and sequence, in-depth exploration of important events and challenging activities and questions for students to develop higher order cognitive processes and skills like critical thinking and decision making,” unfortunately this demand continues to be relevant.<sup>60</sup>

In our contemporary world the understanding of history is shifting towards an approach that is wide in scope, transcultural and relational, one that does not prescribe fixed chronologies, periodisation schemes or courses of time (*Zeitverlaufsvorstellungen*), as Jörn Rüsen has called them. Unfortunately, in places like Turkey and Armenia, the field of history is still not free of past ridden taboos and a hidden pressure on historians persists. As Ronald Grigor Suny pointed out in 1993 “Criticism has been avoided as if it might aid ever-present enemies, and certain kinds of inquiry have been shunned as potential betrayals of the national cause.”<sup>61</sup> Unfortunately, this situation continues. It is important to remember and remind students that history is a constant movement, a dynamic flux where the direction or the texture cannot be confined or essentialised within a few traits like tolerance or love of freedom in an eternalised nation-state.

Besides the difficulty of defining these terms and tracing them throughout history, the multiplicity of time/historical layers disappears in such simplified and unilinear chronological formations in these textbooks. We need to think about how the chronologies in textbooks can be altered, so that they do reflect some of the dynamics of historical development, and we need to make students ask questions rather than provide them with monolithic answers. The horizontal and diachronic design of chronology needs to be reassessed. The normative objectives in pedagogical strategies that hinder the development of students’ critical competence also need to be reassessed. More importantly, education needs to be re-aligned with the needs of new generations and technologies with regard to learning of and about time.<sup>62</sup> We need to integrate vertical or synchronic narratives, thus offering students a hint of different layers of time in history. Regarding Turkish and Armenian history textbook, they would need to break with the idea of history as a temporal orientation toward a nation-state. The state-centred periodisation and underlying *chronologies* create insulated historical narratives downplaying or displacing “cross-cultural” interactions and perspectives. As Sebouh David Aslanian explains focusing also on a vertical system will emphasise the existence of synchronic events and phenomena and will make students think about the differences in flows of

60 Yıldırım, “High School Textbooks in Turkey” (see note 58), 226.

61 Ronald Grigor Suny, *Looking toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 2.

62 There is new research into how the employment of hyper-media timelines, virtual reality and 3D systems can improve the learning of time. See Jose Gómez Galán, “Learning Historical and Chronological Time: Practical Applications,” *European Journal of Science and Theology* 12, no.1 (2016): 5–16.

time in different regions and cultures, opening their minds to “connected histories of cultures and regions and the circulation of elites, capital, and cultural forms across vast areas.”<sup>63</sup> Conceptualising time in multiple layers and thinking about synchronicity will facilitate attempts to break away from history as single linear, temporal whole and an open space for multiple orientations in human life.

63 Sebouh David Aslanian, “From ‘Autonomous’ to ‘Interactive’ Histories: World History’s Challenge to Armenian Studies,” in *An Armenian Mediterranean: Words and Worlds in Motion*, ed. Kathryn Babayan and Michael Pifer (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 83. On ‘connected histories’ see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Islamic Eurasia,” *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 3, Special Issue: The Eurasian Context of the Early Modern History of Mainland South East Asia, 1400–1800. (Jul., 1997): 735–762.

