



The Ottoman Legacy in Algerian Textbooks: Postcolonial Memory and the Re-signification of the Ottoman Past*

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Abstract: Textbooks play a crucial role in shaping collective memory by transmitting fundamental values, historical narratives, and national identity. While numerous studies have explored Algeria–Turkey relations, there has been little attention to how the Ottomans, Turks, and Turkey are represented in Algerian collective memory. This study addresses this gap by analyzing Arabic, History, and Geography textbooks used from primary to secondary education in Algeria. The findings reveal that Algerian textbooks construct a predominantly positive image of the Ottoman Empire and its legacy. The Ottomans are depicted not merely as a conquering power but as a refined civilization that excelled in science, architecture, culture, and art, and as a protector of the Islamic world. The narrative emphasizes voluntary union rather than conquest, framing Ottoman–Algerian relations as cooperative and mutually supportive. Istanbul is portrayed as a scientific, cultural, and intellectual center, offering an alternative civilizational reference point beyond Europe. This article argues that such representations constitute a selective re-signification of the Ottoman past, shaped by Algeria’s colonial experience and post-independence memory politics. In contrast to Egyptian and Balkan textbooks, Algerian narratives integrate Ottoman history into the national story as part of an anti-colonial and Islamic civilizational continuum.

Keywords: Textbooks, Algeria, Ottoman Empire, Turkey, Collective Memory, Postcolonialism

Öz: Ders kitapları, temel değerleri, tarihsel anlatıları ve ulusal kimliğin temel referanslarını aktararak kolektif hafızanın şekillenmesinde önemli bir rol oynar. Cezayir–Türkiye ilişkilerini inceleyen çok sayıda çalışma olmasına rağmen, Osmanlılar, Türkler ve Türkiye’nin Cezayir kolektif hafızasında nasıl temsil edildiğine yönelik çalışmalar ise çok nadirdir. Bu çalışma, Cezayir’de ilkokuldan ortaokula kadar kullanılan Arapça, tarih ve coğrafya ders kitaplarını analiz ederek literatürdeki bu boşluğu doldurmayı hedeflemektedir. Cezayir ders kitapları Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve mirası hakkında oldukça olumlu bir portre sunmaktadır. Ders kitaplarında Osmanlılar, sadece fetihçi bir güç olarak değil, bilim, mimari, kültür ve sanatta üstün bir medeniyet ve İslam dünyasının koruyucusu olarak tasvir edilmektedir. Ders kitapları, fetihlerden ziyade gönüllü birliği vurgulamakta ve Osmanlı–Cezayir ilişkilerini işbirliğine dayalı ve karşılıklı destekleyici olarak sunmaktadır. İstanbul ve Osmanlı bilimsel, kültürel ve entelektüel bir merkez olarak tasvir edilmekte ve Avrupa medeniyetine alternatif olarak sunulmaktadır. Bu makale, Cezayir’in sömürge deneyimi ve bağımsızlık sonrası hafıza politikaları tarafından şekillendirilen Osmanlı geçmişinin seçici bir şekilde yeniden üretildiğini savunmaktadır. Mısır ve Balkan ders kitaplarının aksine, Cezayir tarih yazımı Osmanlı tarihini anti-sömürgeci ve İslami medeniyet sürekliliğinin bir parçası olarak ulusal anlatılar ile bütünleştirmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ders kitapları, Cezayir, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Türkiye, Kolektif Hafıza, Postkolonyalizm

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Introduction

The emergence of mass schooling marked a significant transformation in the role of education within modern societies, especially in the context of nation-states. Education not only transmits essential knowledge and skills to children and adolescents but also facilitates the internalisation of shared values, norms, and collective identity that support social cohesion. Durkheim contends that schools are central institutions for preparing individuals for social integration and for fostering a new moral consciousness Durkheim (2016, 2023). As nation-states expanded, education increasingly operated as a strategic instrument to promote civic loyalty. Anderson (1995) conceptualises nations as “imagined communities,” in which most members have never met yet experience a shared sense of belonging, reinforced by education, printed materials, and official narratives that construct these communities.

The formation of nation-states made it necessary to create a homogeneous common culture, both to train a workforce suited to the needs of industrial society and to forge new national citizens. A shared language and mass education became the most essential tools for this task. In this context, the construction of a common language and the spread of mass schooling were primary instruments of nation-states. According to Gellner (1992), modern nation-states have used education as a deliberate tool of social engineering to produce a homogeneous culture. Breuilly (2001) emphasises that many nation-states were established after World War I without a strong national identity or mass loyalty and therefore accelerated nation-building through compulsory primary education and popular cultural instruments. Nation-states have used education as a conscious tool of social engineering to foster loyalty and commitment to the state (Hobsbawm, 1995; Billig, 1997). In this process, textbooks have acquired a special position in the construction of national identity and collective memory. In line with Hobsbawm’s concept of “invented traditions,” myths, symbols, historical narratives, and linguistic elements have been reorganised, ritualised, and institutionalised to serve national objectives (Hobsbawm, 1993, 1995). These narratives have selectively reimagined the past rather than conveying it as it was, highlighting some elements while deliberately omitting others (Smith, 1996). Invented traditions, myths, and symbols emphasise common ancestors and a shared history, and they have generally emerged at critical political turning points, often during periods of deep cultural conflict and accelerated economic and social change (Smith, 1984). However, the reinvention of history alone is not sufficient. Schools play a critical role in disseminating these narratives to the masses. Teachers and schools occupy a special position in the production and circulation of historical theses used in nation-building processes (Behar, 1992; Copeaux, 1998). Studies show that history education is central to identity formation and the legitimization of

dominant narratives, which are transmitted to younger generations through textbooks (Pamuk, 2013; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2017). These narratives are historically contingent and shaped by state ideology, as illustrated by the shift in Turkish textbooks from negative portrayals of the Ottoman past in the early Republican period to more positive framings after the 1950s (Alaca, 2022).

The writing of history and the construction of national narratives become even more complex in postcolonial societies. Colonial experiences extended beyond political and economic domination to profoundly influence knowledge production, historiography, and social memory. A Euro-Western-centred understanding of history that presents the concepts of progress, modernity, and civilization as universal standards has relegated the historical experiences of colonized societies to a secondary and inadequate position. This dynamic demonstrates that historical knowledge is not neutral or objective but is produced within specific power relations. Colonial domination is perpetuated not only by external forces but also by local elites in the postcolonial era. Colonial discourse is maintained by both Western academia and states, as well as by local actors who adopt and recirculate these narratives. Historiography frequently reproduces national narratives within Western-centric epistemological frameworks and through the uncritical internalisation of colonial knowledge regimes. Presented as “objective” and “scientific,” this colonial knowledge compels local communities to interpret their historical experiences through Western concepts and hierarchies. Consequently, the colonial mindset continues to shape educational policies and historiography in nation-states even after the formal end of colonial rule (Said, 1978).

In the postcolonial period, national historical narratives have often remained shaped by European-centred concepts of time, progress, and modernity, thereby reproducing narratives of “delayed” or “incomplete” modernity. As Chakrabarty puts it, as long as this epistemological framework remains unquestioned, Europe will continue to be the natural centre of universal history. Therefore, “provincializing Europe” means not only criticising European history but also enabling non-Western societies to think about their own historical experiences through alternative centres and understandings of time (Chakrabarty, 2009). Colonial domination, as Fanon (2008) also pointed out, is a process that transforms the subject from within. Without mental and historical decolonisation, political independence can reproduce colonial hierarchies in different forms. Fanon (2008) emphasises that narratives that romanticise the past may not be able to break their ties with the colonial mindset, pointing to the need for a critical reconstruction of national memory. At this point, Trouillot’s conceptualisation of “the silencing of the past” shows that historical narratives consist not only of transmitted information but also of elements that are excluded and rendered invisible (Trouillot, 1995).

Textbooks are the most visible and institutional carriers of these selective historical narratives. As a society's canonical knowledge, textbooks define historical writing, the nation's boundaries, and acceptable forms of identity. Societies write their own pasts through textbooks, project images of themselves into the future, and define their social boundaries (Hanna, 2009). At the same time, textbooks are not merely texts that convey information; they are tools that contain political messages and reproduce social norms (Lozic & Hintermann, 2010). In these carefully produced texts, what information is legitimate and what boundaries should not be crossed are clearly defined. State-approved textbooks are the most concrete and reliable sources of the national narrative, and students are repeatedly exposed to this narrative throughout their educational lives (Brand, 2010).

Therefore, textbooks are indispensable sources for analysing a society's teaching processes, its understanding of history, and its self-definition. Subjects such as history, geography, and civics teach students acceptable approaches to events and facts by conveying political, historical, and cultural orientations (Lozic & Hintermann, 2010). In this respect, textbooks are fundamental texts that establish and reproduce collective memory. Examining textbooks is not only a pedagogical analysis but also an ideological examination. This is because the information contained in these texts has been produced and legitimised by specific institutions and actors at specific historical moments. Examining how the information presented through textbooks is selected and structured allows us to understand how the information conveyed in schools reinforces or reproduces existing social and institutional arrangements (Apple, 1990). These selectively constructed narratives shape a society's collective memory and collective identity (Ülen & Markom, 2016). Therefore, textbooks are fundamental documents for understanding how states imagine citizens, society, and the future. Indeed, the power of textbooks to shape young people's identities, define the "other," and build civic consciousness is quite critical (UNESCO, 2018).

This theoretical framework provides an analytical basis for understanding how historical narratives are constructed in societies that have experienced prolonged and intense colonialism. Algeria, which remained under Ottoman rule for approximately three centuries and then endured a long period of French colonial rule, is an important example of a postcolonial society that has rebuilt its national historical narratives through education. Especially after independence, education and textbooks have become among the main arenas in which the relationship with the past has been redefined.

The existing literature shows that the Ottoman period in Algerian historical narratives is presented mainly as compatible with local elements, with relatively limited

central control, and within the framework of a protective-supportive relationship through the Barbaros brothers (Farid & Mohamed, 2025; Boussaid, 2025). In these narratives, Ottoman rule is portrayed as a form of governance that provided stability through religious, administrative, and socio-cultural institutions, rather than as a conquest-based relationship of domination. In contrast, the French colonial period is generally addressed in Algerian historiography as characterised by experiences of violence and oppression (Laallam et al., 2021; Hill, 2009). However, this study does not focus on the representation of French colonialism in textbooks; instead, it examines how the Ottoman and Turkish perception is constructed within this contrasting historical context.

The highly centralised structure of the Algerian education system, with textbooks prepared and approved by the state and used in a standardised manner throughout the country, makes these texts the carriers of the official historical narrative. Therefore, textbooks offer an appropriate and limited field of analysis for examining how the image of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey is produced and transmitted at the institutional level.

Within this framework, the study analyses how perceptions of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey are represented in textbooks taught at the primary, middle, and high school levels in Algeria. The main objective of the study is to reveal how Algeria's historical relationship with its Ottoman past is interpreted through textbooks. In this regard, the paper aims to discuss the themes that shape the Ottoman and Turkish image and how these representations are incorporated into historical narratives in a postcolonial context.

Research Design and Methodology

Textbooks used at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels in Algeria are prepared by the National School Publications Office (NSPO), which is affiliated with the Ministry of National Education, and are used in educational institutions with the Ministry's approval. The Minister of National Education at the time clearly stated that the main objective of NSPO is to ensure the production, printing, and distribution of textbooks approved by the Ministry of National Education to educational institutions throughout the country (Radio Algérie, 2024). Within this framework, Arabic, history, geography, and civics textbooks are also prepared and approved by NSPO.

In this study, we analyzed Arabic, history, geography, and civics textbooks for Grades 4–5 at the primary level; Arabic, history, and geography textbooks for Grades 1–4 at the middle school level; and Arabic, history, and geography textbooks for

Grades 1–3 at the high school level. The catalogs of the textbooks examined are available on the official website of the ONPS, and digital copies can also be accessed through various educational platforms (National School Publications Office, n.d.; Eddirasa, n.d.). Some textbooks were published before 2020. However, a review of the relevant Ministry of Education web pages indicates that these textbooks are still in use in schools.

Studies on textbooks mostly analyze history textbooks, and occasionally geography and civics textbooks. In this study, language and literature textbooks have also been included in the analysis, in addition to the aforementioned textbooks. The main reason for this is that literary texts such as poems, stories, and novels in language and literature textbooks are important carriers of national narratives, historical references, and discourses on identity construction. Indeed, as mentioned above, language and literary texts, as well as historical narratives, are considered fundamental documents that play a central role in the establishment of nation-states and in nation-building. Accordingly, a total of 29 textbooks were examined in this study.

A four-person team of students from Arabic Translation and Interpreting program, along with a faculty member, was formed to to screen the textbooks. The team was trained on the screening process and established criteria for their review. The screening lasted five weeks, during July and August 2024. Weekly meetings were held with the screening team to discuss their findings and how to categorize the data. After the initial screening, the data from the textbooks was checked, and re-screened when necessary. A dataset was then prepared for analysis, which was conducted using thematic analysis methods to reveal patterns and themes (Braun & Clarke, 2019). To make the large qualitative dataset manageable, it first needed to be narrowed down through a process called coding, starting with an initial set of temporary codes known as open coding. The data from the textbooks was organized into meaningful pieces and assigned codes, which were then grouped into categories and themes (Creswell, 2007).

Findings and Discussion

The Algerian education system is highly centralized. As a result of this centralization, the curriculum, examination system, and teacher training processes are standardized (Canonne, 2024; Hadjeris, 2025). The 2003 education reform reorganized the system into five years of primary school, four years of middle school, and three years of high school (Education Policy and Data Center, 2014; Hadjeris, 2025).

During the 132-year French colonial period, the education system was restructured to reinforce a European-centered cultural model. French was established as the

official language, Arabic was prohibited in modern schools, and local languages such as Darija and Tamazight were marginalized. Access to education for Algerians was also severely restricted (Benrabah, 2014). Following independence, the Algerian state sought to democratize education and expand access for all citizens. Efforts to address the colonial legacy included Arabizing both the curriculum and the language of instruction (Sarnou, 2024; Soltani, 2025).

Education in Algeria serves a central function in preserving national identity and cultural heritage. The curriculum reflects the country's cultural structure and Islamic foundations, with particular emphasis on Arabic, Islamic sciences, and Algerian history. Schools are widely regarded by educators and parents as essential institutions for constructing and transmitting national identity. Within this framework, Arabic literature, Islamic studies, and Algerian history are core subjects that shape students' sense of national identity (Sarnou, 2024; Soltani, 2025). Citizenship education has also evolved significantly in response to Algeria's political history. During the colonial era, the French-centered educational approach marginalized indigenous identities and citizenship concepts. After independence, educational objectives shifted toward national unity and cultural reconstruction, emphasizing Arabization and Islamic values (El Hadi & Kamel, 2024).

Strengthening national unity and culture is a central objective of Algerian education policies. This aim is closely linked to consolidating national identity, defined by the interplay of Islamic, Arab, and Amazigh elements. Curriculum guidelines specify that educational programs should be grounded in values, prioritizing the transmission of religion, language, and shared history as fundamental components of national identity to future generations. Practical activities that enable students to engage with the past, learn about their ancestors' history, and develop pride in their national heritage are considered particularly important at the primary education level (Mada & Ben Zeroug, 2024).

Arabization policies have played a significant role in addressing the French colonial legacy during the post-independence period. These policies were implemented as an explicit anti-colonial strategy, developed in direct opposition to the French-centered assimilationist approach to education (Hadjeris, 2025).

Algerian textbooks seeking to depart from the colonial narrative emphasize the brutality of French colonization and the heroism of the Algerian people during the struggle for independence. These textbooks address various historical periods, including Berber, Arab, Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman eras, without depicting these states negatively. In contrast, the French occupation is presented in a distinctly unfavorable manner. The relationship between the Ottoman Empire and Algeria is

portrayed as amicable, with an emphasis on mutual support. The following section examines the representation of the Ottoman and Turkish image in Algerian textbooks.

Voluntarily Accepting Ottoman Rule

Algerian textbooks emphasize that Algeria did not become part of the Ottoman Empire through conquest, but voluntarily entered under the protection of the Ottoman Empire/Caliphate as the representative of Muslims. The textbooks describe the process of Algeria's annexation to Ottoman rule as follows. The Spanish domination in the Mediterranean began to threaten Algeria. During this period, Oruç Reis and Barbaros Hayrettin, who resisted European piracy in the Mediterranean and rescued Andalusians, were quite famous names. As the Spanish attacks on Algerian ports intensified, the people of Algeria asked for help from these names. After the martyrdom of Oruç Reis in 1518, Barbarossa Hayrettin, who was aware of the Spanish danger, advised the people to enter the Ottoman protectorate, where they shared the same religious beliefs. Algeria became a province of the Ottoman administration after the Algerian people embraced Ottoman protection. Barbarossa Hayrettin was appointed emir (governor) of Algeria (Ministry of Education [MoE], Primary History 4, 2020, pp.53-58). Later, Barbaros Hayrettin Pasha was appointed as the 25th Ottoman Captain-General and Sultan of Algeria (p.22). In the textbook, it is frequently emphasized that the Ottomans came to Algeria upon the demand of the people, unlike other Arab countries, and that the Ottomans did not establish a direct rule in Algeria, and that Algeria was semi-independent or even fully independent.

Semi-Independent or Even Fully Independent Algeria During the Ottoman Rule

Algerian textbooks emphasise that, despite being a protectorate of the Ottoman Empire, Algeria operated with a degree of semi-independence in its internal and external affairs. It demonstrated loyalty by sending tribute and paying taxes (MoE, Primary History 4, 2020, p.58). Notably, Algeria was referred to as the Republic of Algeria in correspondence with King Louis XIV of France (MoE, Middle School History 3, 2017, p.68). Algeria also established direct diplomatic relations with various European nations, collecting taxes in exchange for maritime protection (MoE, Primary School History 4, 2020, p. 60). The peace treaty with Spain, signed on December 9, 1791, in which Spain compensated Algeria upon its withdrawal, further highlights Algeria's autonomy (MoE, High School History 1, n.d., p. 93). A key indicator of Algeria's status is its distinct land and naval forces, showcasing its unique maritime capabilities:

The admirable Algerian navy not only protected and defended the borders and coasts of Algeria, but also the Icelandic Sea in the remote regions of Scandinavia, the coasts of England, the English coast, the English coast of the English Channel (North Sea) and the Atlantic Ocean, as well as its lake, the Mediterranean Sea. It also played a role in supporting the Ottoman Empire by ensuring international security and fighting against European pirates. (MoE, Middle School History 3, 2017, p.64)

Algerian textbooks highlight the strength of the land army, noting that it includes Turks, Arabs, Berbers, and other Mediterranean peoples, alongside a strong navy (MoE, Middle School History 3, 2017, p.52).

Algeria's independence from the Ottomans is reflected in Mufdi Zekeriya's poem "Turks Helped Us and We Won Victory," which explores the Algerian-Ottoman relations:

The Turks helped us until we were victorious.

Turks do not forget past promises,

We ruled the country with justice

We did good things and protected the borders.

We did not depend on the Turks

However, as they strengthened us, so we strived... (MoE, Primary School History 4, 2020, p.58)

The poem highlights that while Algerians valued the support of the Turks, it was not subordinate to them. The relationship with the Ottomans is characterised by military cooperation and spiritual loyalty to Islam in opposition to Christian powers, rather than simple allegiance (MoE, High School History 1, n.d., p.115). This cooperation evolved from military backing to encompass broader social and economic support.

Algerian textbooks highlight the Ottomans' role in spreading Islam in Europe, noting their influence alongside earlier Islamic presences in places such as Sicily and Al-Andalus, which extended as far as the Balkans and Vienna (MoE, Middle School History 2, 2018, p. 92). They also highlight Turkish contributions in early battles against the Crusaders and the significance of the Seljuk Turks' resistance against the Mongol threat (p. 105). Overall, the Ottomans and Turks are depicted as both a nation and a state pivotal in promoting Islam and defending it from external threats.

Foundation of the Ottoman Empire

The textbooks describe the battle of Malazgirt as a crucial moment for the Empire's foundation and the decline of the Byzantine Empire. Ertuğrul Bey's battle against

the Mongols in 1258 is noted to create a positive narrative of the Empire's origins. Ertuğrul established a principality, later expanded by his son Osman, who gained recognition after the Seljuk state's collapse (MoE, Middle School History 3, 2017, pp.20-21).

The first chapter of the Middle School History textbook discusses Ottoman conquests starting with Osman Bey. It highlights the conquest of Bursa and the establishment of Ottoman sovereignty in Anatolia (p.21). The Ottomans' expansion into the Balkans, the establishment of Edirne as the capital, and the conquests of Thessaloniki and Sofia are noted, leading to the encirclement of Istanbul (p.22). Under Murad I, they conquered Macedonia and Greece, and Sultan Beyazıt I began the conquest of Serbia but faced setbacks (p.24). The chapter also covers the Battle of Ankara, where Timur defeated Beyazıt, delaying Istanbul's conquest by about 50 years (p.25).

The Conquest of Istanbul and Mehmet the Conqueror

In Algerian textbooks, Mehmet the Conqueror and the conquest of Istanbul are presented in detail over about four pages. The text highlights Sultan Mehmet's exceptional qualities and character traits, noting his education under prominent scholars, such as Molla Gürani, and his experience in state administration in Manisa (MoE, Middle School History 3, 2017, p. 26). It includes a passage praising him, with Venetian Giacomo de Languschi describing him after the conquest as similar to Alexander the Great. He emphasizes Mehmet's bravery, decisiveness, innovative governance, historical knowledge, awareness of European affairs, fluency in multiple languages, and military studies, showcasing his resilience:

26 years old, fair-skinned, well-built, above average height, with strong arms, a young man whose appearance arouses more admiration than respect. He laughs little, is erudite, independent-minded, determined in his goals, brave in all things like Alexander the Great, and eager for fame. Every day, he listened to the histories of the Romans and others, the historical stories of popes, emperors, kings of France and Lombard princes. He spoke three languages: Turkish, Greek and Slavic... He was a researcher, quick-witted and burning with the desire to rule. This is the man we Christians must face. He is cautious, able to endure hardship, cold, heat, thirst and hunger... (MoE, Middle School History 3, 2017, p.40)

Algerian textbooks state that Istanbul was besieged many times before Mehmet the Conqueror, but without success, and that the Ottoman army conquered Istanbul on the morning of Tuesday, May 29, 1453. During the conquest of Istanbul, the ships were marched by land, with the promise that no one would be harmed if Byzantium

surrendered. This was accompanied by the hadith “What a beautiful commander is the commander who conquered Istanbul” (MoE, Middle School History 3, 2017, pp. 26-29).

The Sultan began to think of a way to bring his ships into the harbour to complete the siege by land and sea. A strange idea came to his mind: Carrying the ships by land so that they could get past the chains placed to block them. This unusual task was accomplished by laying a path of varying lengths on land and placing wooden planks on which oil was poured, making it easier for the ships to slide. In this way, it was possible to move about seventy ships in one night. At dawn, the besieged saw this and were convinced that there was no escape from the Ottoman victory over them. Sultan Mehmed sent a message to Constantine, informing him that if he voluntarily surrendered the country to him, he would promise not to harm the freedom of the people and their property (MoE, Middle School History 3, 2017, p.29).

In addition, the High School History 1 textbook presents Mehmet the Conqueror’s speech to his army during the conquest of Istanbul (MoE, High School History 1, n.d., p.33). It is emphasised that the conquest of Istanbul is of great importance for the Islamic world and Christianity and that it was a conquest that opened and closed an era (p.31). The importance of the conquest of Istanbul for world history is expressed as follows:

The capture of Constantinople on May 29, 1453, was a great event, in fact, one of the most significant events in world history and the most influential and decisive event for the fate and future of Europe. It allowed the Turks to impose their supremacy and control for centuries, bringing a great catastrophe to Greek nationalism... This event almost changed the dawn of history forever and was an extraordinary act for many reasons, not least because it was the first major siege in which the recently invented cannon was successfully used. It truly marked the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the modern centuries (p.33).

Alongside the conquest of Istanbul, the notable achievements of Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror in other conquests are also highlighted.

The Reign of Suleiman the Magnificent

Algerian textbooks describe the territorial expansions that took place during the reign of Sultan Selim. Among these, the Ottoman conquests of Syria and Egypt are discussed in detail. The conquest of Egypt and the subsequent transfer of the caliphate to the Ottoman Empire are mentioned, along with Sultan Selim assuming the title of Caliph of the Muslims (MoE, Middle School History 3, 2017, p.32).

The textbooks detail Sultan Suleiman's reign, highlighting the conquest of Belgrade in 1521 after 70 years of resistance. According to the textbooks, following the conquest, the Ottomans transformed the city with Ottoman-style architecture, building inns, baths, mosques, and traditional houses, turning it into a Turkish-Arab city. The efforts significantly advanced the city's development, and the local population readily embraced Islam (Middle School History 3, 2017, p.34). During the reign of Sultan Suleiman, notable advancements were made in various fields, including science and art, reflecting the enriched cultural and intellectual landscape of the era.

The Ottoman Empire as a Highly Developed Civilisation

While textbooks often detail the extensive conquests of the Ottoman Sultans, they also underscore the Empire's crucial role as a civilization-building state. Beyond its military achievements, the Ottoman Empire is distinguished by its sophisticated military organization, which encompassed both land and naval forces, as well as the advanced technological weaponry utilized during its campaigns. Additionally, the Empire is recognized for its highly developed administrative systems, vibrant religious life, strong educational framework, and various philanthropic foundations. It is further noted that the Empire's cultivated culture, in conjunction with its military prowess, enabled it to exert influence over a vast geographical region:

The Empire's expansion and military power came with a strong economy, a precise administration and a rich and refined culture. The thriving capital, Istanbul, had been a vast and prosperous "mother city" and a magnet for the ambitious and talented since the time of Suleiman's ancestors, attracting poets, scientists, artists, engineers, administrators and clergy from all over the Empire. All this contributed to creating the distinctive character of the new Ottoman civilisation. This civilisation reached its highest levels and achieved its greatest successes during the reign of the Magnificent and under his special patronage... Sinan, the greatest of the Ottoman architects, furnished the capital with magnificent mosques, the most spectacular of which is the Suleymaniye Mosque, where the Sultan's own mausoleum is located. (MoE, Middle School History 3, 2017, p.36)

Textbooks noted that Mimar Sinan, one of the most important architects of the Ottoman Empire's strong civilisation and fine culture, is recognised for his notable works, including Şehzadebaşı and Suleymaniye Mosque. Afterwards, different mosques such as Eyüp Sultan Mosque are mentioned and visuals of these mosques are given (MoE, Middle School History 3, 2017, pp.36- 37). The most important indicator of the founding civilisational characteristics of the Empire is also seen in the special importance and praise given to Istanbul.

In short, Algerian textbooks provide information about the founding process of the Ottoman Empire, its expansion, wars and conquests, and the sultans who made these conquests, and support them with maps and various visuals. However, they also mention the outstanding qualities of the Ottoman Sultans, especially Mehmet the Conqueror and Suleiman the Magnificent. In addition, the Ottoman Empire is presented not as a state that exploited the resources of conquered or dominated regions, but as a state that enriched these regions. One can see this especially in the example of the conquest of Belgrade and, notably, in the development and prosperity of Algeria under Ottoman rule.

The Ottoman Empire as an Islamic State

According to the textbooks, The Ottoman Empire is often noted for its establishment and maintenance as an Islamic state, closely following Islamic Sharia. A notable early example of this emphasis can be found in Osman Bey's will to his son, Orhan, of which an excerpt is included in the textbook:

My son: Beware of undertaking anything that Allah, the Lord of the worlds, has not commanded. If you are in a dilemma in judgment, seek the advice of religious scholars as a refuge.

My son: Honor those who obey you, be generous to your soldiers, do not let Satan deceive you with your soldiers and wealth, and beware of straying away from the people of the Shari'ah.

My son: You know that our goal is to please the Lord of the Worlds. Through jihad, the light of our religion will spread to all horizons, and thus the pleasure of Allah Almighty will be gained.

My son: We are not among those who wage war out of lust, governance or self-control. We live by Islam and die for Islam... (High School History 1, n.d., p.31).

This prayer emphasizes loyalty to Islamic Sharia, adherence to religion, and following religious scholars, highlighting the sentiment of living and dying for Islam. The close relationship between the Ottoman sultans and Islam is noted, exemplified by Fatih's prayer at the conquest of Istanbul, Sultan Selim's caliphate, and Sultan Suleiman's construction of magnificent mosques that transformed Istanbul. The Ottoman Empire is described as an Islamic state ruled by a Muslim sultan, governed by Islamic law, which encompassed diverse peoples and religions due to its vast conquests across Asia, Europe, and Africa.

Ottoman Tolerance

Algerian textbooks portray the Ottoman Empire as a tolerant ruler that respected the people of its conquered regions, with many voluntarily adopting Islam. The relationship with Algeria is highlighted as a key example of Ottoman tolerance, with no mention of exploitation or oppression. After the conquests of Istanbul and Belgrade, it is noted that the Ottomans enriched these cities and treated their inhabitants kindly, often being more tolerant towards Christians than other states:

The treatment of the Christian subjects by the Ottoman sultans... shows a tolerance not seen in Europe until then, at least after the conquest of Greece and two centuries ago. The Calvinists in Hungary and Transylvania and the Unitarian Christians in Transylvania always preferred the Ottoman yoke to falling into the hands of the fanatical Hapsburg family, and the Protestants looked favorably on Turkey... In the same way, we find that Caucasians belonging to the Old Believers' assembly and persecuted by the Russian state church found in the Sultan's kingdom a tolerance that their Christian brethren did not give them. (MoE, High School History 1, n.d., p.26)

Algerian textbooks assert that the Ottoman Empire's tolerance originated from the Islamic law underpinning its status as an Islamic state. Under this law, non-Muslims were required to pay a tax but were granted the right to practice their own religions and adhere to their own interpretations of Sharia (MoE, High School History 1, n.d., p.26).

Ottoman Support for Muslim Peoples

Algerian textbooks highlight the Ottoman Empire's role as an Islamic state and center of the Caliphate during the struggle against Christian Crusader in the late 15th and early 16th centuries. During this period, Christian Europe launched attacks from multiple fronts, including invasions of the Mediterranean coast by the Italians, supported by the Spanish, French, and Maltese, as well as assaults by the Portuguese on Southern Arabia. The Ottomans, alongside the Maghreb countries and the Mamluks, worked to repel these threats. Following the Mamluks' defeat, the Ottomans gained control over the holy mosques, Egypt, and Damascus, while the Hejaz joined them without resistance. Ottoman forces, led by Barbarossa Hayrettin Pasha, established a strong navy, liberating the western Mediterranean from Spanish and Portuguese control, and Tunisia and Libya became Ottoman provinces (MoE, High School History 1, n.d., p.24). Additionally, a map illustrates the Ottomans' fight against Christian kingdoms in the East and Southeast (p.8).

Praise for Istanbul

Algerian textbooks exhibit a notable appreciation and interest in Istanbul. Both literature and history textbooks feature examples of poems dedicated to İstanbul. Furthermore, many textbooks, particularly those focused on the historical peninsula, include numerous images of Istanbul, showcasing landmarks such as the Sultanahmet Mosque, Hagia Sophia, Suleymaniye Mosque, and Eyüp Sultan. For instance, under the section detailing the history and civilisation of İstanbul, a representation from the Byzantine period is presented, highlighting Istanbul's unique historical significance. It is also noted that, situated at the crossroads of two continents, Istanbul began to occupy a more prominent role on the world stage following its conquest by the Ottomans. An image of Hagia Sophia is included, with commentary on its transformation into a mosque after the conquest, and its later status as a museum (MoE, Middle School History 3, 2017, p.18).

The Algerian textbooks showcase Ottoman-era artefacts and notable sites in Istanbul through visual representations. Alongside Hagia Sophia, an image of the Blue Mosque is provided, complete with its construction date. Additionally, the textbooks feature an illustration of the Bosphorus Bridge and a depiction of the peninsula encompassing Topkapı Palace, Blue Mosque, and Hagia Sophia, underscoring Istanbul's golden age in Europe (MoE, Middle School History 3, 2017, p.19). It is emphasised that Istanbul is a city of exceptional significance in numerous ways and held a noteworthy status even in the pre-Islamic period. A prime illustration of this is captured in an excerpt from Philip Mansih's book titled *Istanbul: The City the World Desires*:

Constantinople was by its very nature a city desired by everyone, as if its geography and history had prepared it to be the capital of a great empire. The city lies at the tip of a triangular peninsula surrounded on three sides by the sea: the Golden Horn harbor to the north, the Sea of Marmara to the south and the Bosphorus to the east. The city was therefore a natural fortress and a unique deep harbor. It was also located at the crossroads of the Danube and Euphrates basins, as well as the main land routes between Europe and Asia. It is as if its location was created to be the source of wealth from all over the world. (Middle School History 3, 2017, p.38)

The Ottomans are renowned for leaving behind a wealth of unique mosques and architectural masterpieces in Istanbul, with over three thousand mosques in the city. Istanbul was recognized as one of the world's most significant cultural centers, particularly during the Ottoman era. In light of this, various textbooks feature numerous historical and contemporary images of Istanbul. In addition to these images, the textbooks also include examples of poetry that celebrate the city.

Notably, some stanzas from Poet Nabi's poem, "Der Beyân-ı Şeref-i İstanbul [On the Glory of Istanbul]" are shared, highlighting the literary admiration for Istanbul. Below are selected excerpts from this poem:

There is no place for true knowledge and wisdom to be fully embraced
Except, perhaps, for Istanbul itself.
To bear the fruits of the garden of art,
No city compares to Istanbul.
May God keep Istanbul ever thriving,
For all noble matters dwell therein.
The birthplace of ambition and valor,
A school of virtue for nations and trades.
Though the heavens revolve through ages and lands,
They find no city like Istanbul.
In design, painting, calligraphy, and illumination,
All grace and beauty reside in Istanbul.
Whatever branches of art exist,
They find brilliance and glory in Istanbul.
With its unique charm and breathtaking sights,
The sea has embraced it in its arms.
In short, all crafts and skills,
Find honor and pride only in Istanbul. (MoE, Middle School History 3, 2017, p.39)

This poem praises Istanbul as a magnificent center of knowledge, art, and beauty, emphasising its importance and urging for its perpetual prosperity. Algerian textbooks highlight historical cultural ties between Algeria and Istanbul, noting that Algeria was known as "Little Istanbul" for its wealth, advanced crafts, and status in the Mediterranean. During the Ottoman period, Algeria attracted adventurers, scholars, and dervishes (MoE, Middle School History 3, 2017, p.41). Students are prompted to explain why Algeria is referred to as Little Istanbul.

Modern Türkiye

The High School 3 history textbook addresses significant developments in recent world history, including the Cold War, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Korean War, the Vietnam conflict, and the Palestinian issues. However, Turkey is given minimal attention in these discussions. It is mentioned in two specific contexts: first, regarding Turkey's accession to the Baghdad Pact and its subsequent membership in NATO (MoE, High School History 3, n.d., p. 72). Secondly, the textbook touches on the

Cyprus issue. Notably, Algerian textbooks adopt a stance that supports Turkey's position on this matter. In the section titled "Disputes between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots," the Cyprus issue is explored (MoE, High School History 3, n.d., pp. 103-104). This section notes that the Ottoman Empire ruled Cyprus for three centuries, that Britain occupied the island during World War I, and that the British aimed to grant the island independence in 1960. It also highlights that the population is primarily composed of Orthodox Christians, with a minority of Muslim Turks:

Greek Cypriots, under the leadership of President Makarios, saw these laws as unfair to them. They believed the proportion of Turks, estimated at only 18%, far exceeded the actual proportion; they have since tried to change the constitution to reduce these rights. This caused tension in relations between the two sides. Tensions erupted in 1963 when President Makarios tried to amend the constitution to reduce the rights of Turkish Cypriots and deprive them of the veto through a 13-point proposal known as the Makarios orders. Events escalated dangerously when Greek Cypriots, encouraged by Greece, declared an ethnic and religious war against Turkish Cypriots, burning many Muslim villages and destroying mosques. This led Turkey to demand that the Islamic part of the island secede and be granted independence. Greek Cypriots used these tensions and the absence of Turkish Cypriots in the parliament to change the constitution in their favour. (MoE, High School History 3, n.d., p.104)

The High School History 3 textbook highlights that the issues in Cyprus persisted until 1974. Following a coup d'état in Greece, a corresponding coup was carried out in Cyprus, which led Turkey to deploy troops to the island to protect the Turkish Cypriots. As a result, Turkey gained control over the northern part of the island, accounting for 38% of its total area. Consequently, Turkish Cypriots migrated north while Greek Cypriots relocated south. Additionally, the textbook states that the Turkish Cypriots established a state with the support of Turkey, a state that is recognized solely by Turkey (MoE, High School History 3, n.d., p. 104).

Conclusion

This study reveals how Algeria, in the postcolonial period, has interpreted its Ottoman and Turkish past to establish a new understanding of history and reconstruct collective memory. Nation-states reorganise, selectively produce, and circulate collective memory and historical narratives to construct national identity and foster loyalty and belonging among citizens. In this context, textbooks play a critical role not only as pedagogical tools but also as institutional carriers of the official historical narrative and social memory. In Algeria, which entered into a direct reckoning with its French colonial legacy after independence, this effort to transform French cultural, historical, and linguistic understanding is embodied in

the establishment of a distinctly positive framework for the Ottoman and Turkish image in textbooks.

In textbooks, the Ottoman past is framed around voluntary participation, mutual support, relative or partial autonomy, and Islamic solidarity. Approximately three centuries of Ottoman rule are presented as an institutionally developed civilisation that provided order and justice, rather than as a narrative of a conquering and coercive empire. Within this narrative, the Ottomans and Turks are portrayed as friendly and protective actors, while colonial France is cast as an opposing figure associated with violence, bloodshed, and oppression.

This image of the Ottomans in Algeria stands in stark contrast to narratives in other Arab-Middle Eastern and Balkan regions ruled by the Ottomans. In Egypt, Lebanon, and Macedonia, the historical, political, and cultural memory of the Ottomans and Turks is largely constructed through negative representations. Egyptian textbooks associate Ottoman rule with heavy taxation, economic decline, and political oppression (Osmanoğlu, 2014; Uysal, 2011; Yılmaz & Osmanoğlu, 2009; while Lebanese textbooks present the late Ottoman period in the context of authoritarian rule and the atrocities in the Arab region during World War I (Çelik, 2019; Nazarian, 2013). Similarly, Macedonian textbooks frame the Ottoman past around themes of conflict, oppression, and forced Islamisation (Hacısalihoglu, 2014). These narratives omit the positive aspects of the Ottoman administrative, legal, and social systems and present a selective, exclusionary history.

This comparative framework shows that the Ottoman narrative in Algeria is closely related not only to the imperial past “itself” but also to Algeria’s specific experience of colonialism, its struggle for independence, and its post-independence politics of memory. The positive construction of the Ottoman past in Algeria produces an alternative historical reference point in the face of the historical trauma and ruptures created by French colonialism. In this context, the Ottoman past functions not only as a historical period but also as the bearer of an Islamic civilizational continuity and an anti-colonial historical consciousness. This situation shows that history is shaped more by the meaning it acquires over time than by its meaning at the moment it is lived; that historical heritage is not directly inherited from the past but is reproduced within power relations and social processes. Here, the presentation of Algeria’s relationship with the Ottoman Empire as one based on voluntarism and mutual consent points to a selective memory strategy that renders invisible the power asymmetries and political tensions inherent in imperial rule (Trouillot, 1995).

Textbooks emphasise Fatih Sultan Mehmet’s importance and respect for science, as well as the educational and scientific endeavours during the reign of Kanuni Sultan

Süleyman, positioning the Ottoman Empire not merely as a military power but as a highly developed civilisation in science, culture, and art, serving as the bearer of Islamic civilisation. This representation shows that civilisation is not solely a historical product of the West, offering an alternative genealogy of civilisation through Istanbul and the Ottoman Empire. Considering Fanon's (2008) emphasis on historical repair and psychological healing in postcolonial societies, the Ottoman past, and, by extension, the characterisation of Algeria as "Little Istanbul," this can also be interpreted as a symbolic compensation and revaluation against the humiliation and disconnection associated with the colonial experience.

Moreover, the presentation of the Ottoman Empire and Istanbul in textbooks as centres of science, culture, art, and justice is an important component of this alternative historical framework. The narrative of Istanbul challenges the singular, universal European historical construct by showing that modernity and civilisation are not unique to Europe. In this context, it fosters a more pluralistic understanding of history by "provincialising Europe" (Chakrabarty, 2009). Furthermore, the moral opposition established in textbooks between Ottoman justice and European colonialism produces a powerful counter-imperial discourse that reverses the Western-centric Orientalist historical narratives defined by Said (1978). The presentation of the Ottoman Empire as an ethical and civilised power legitimises the Islamic-imperial legacy as a respectable historical reference against colonialism and creates an effective counter-memory against the derogatory representations produced during the colonial period.

Ultimately, this study goes beyond showing how the Ottoman image is represented in Algerian textbooks to reveal how these representations shape collective memory and historical narratives in the postcolonial era. The Algerian example shows that, unlike in other regions ruled by the Ottomans, Ottoman heritage has been reconstructed in a highly positive context. This situation clearly shows that historical narratives are shaped less by an objective transmission of the past than by the relationship that nation-states establish with the past, their experiences of colonialism, and their current ideological orientations.

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