



HISTORIA E POPULLIT SHQIPTAR

PËR SHKOLLAT E MESME

The History of Albanians and their Neighbors in Albanian Textbooks

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Nowadays when the regional and European integration becomes one of the main directions of Albanian development, the mutual historical acknowledgement of Albania and other Balkan countries seem to be an absolute necessity in front of which, the history writers, the teaching curricula makers as well as history teachers of different levels must feel properly obliged.

A successful following of that objective will be guaranteed, if the region's people have the necessary and right knowledge on their relations in the historical past, because only by doing that, they will be able to throw away all the negative messages and to embrace or enrich the positive ones. The Latin sentence "History is a life's teacher", has some special connotations nowadays when the political atmosphere, the building up of safe basis to stability, cultural collaboration, briefly, the europeanization of the region is now an obligatory demand of the epoch.

Albania and Albanians are treated not only in the textbooks of national history (in which Albanian People is mentioned as an exclusive subject of historical narration), but in the textbooks of general history as well. However, only some main aspects of the history of Albanians of different

historical periods are included, summarized, into the latter ones. Much attention is paid to the creation of a realistic impression among the pupils about the Albanian role and contribution to Balkan and European history, culture and civilization, by the historical narration given in the textbooks of history.

In Albanian history textbooks the history of other peoples is given generally, in acceptable proportions. Particularly, the historical periods, which have an important role in World History (Greek and Roman Antiquity, European Humanism and Renaissance, Byzantine and Ottoman Empires, etc.), occupy a considerable space in history textbooks.

There are in Albania's pre-university system of education three textbooks of History of Albanian People for fifth, eighth and twelfth grades respectively which are wholly dedicated to Albanian national history. Besides that, some main topics of Albanian history are treated in the textbooks of general history taught in other grades of the above-mentioned system of education.

In general, the textbooks in Albania do not treat Albanian nationalism as a separate topic worth of attention. On the other hand, we have noticed that, generally, they do not contain much nationalistic sentiment. But this does not mean that in the textbooks in Albania there is no awareness and pride of being Albanian.

In contemporary history textbooks, the struggle and efforts of Albanians for consolidation of an independent state, and for social and economic reforms are presented. Besides that, the Liberation War against the fascist and Nazi conquest, the great contribution of Albania to World War II, are pointed out. In addition, the history of Albania under the totalitarian system (1945-1990) is presented as well. Concerning the treatment of the history of Albania during World War II and the communist totalitarian rule, some

political influences are not yet avoided.

A particular place is given to the efforts of Albanians who have remained outside the borders of the Albanian state (particularly the Albanians of Kosova), for gaining their national rights. Kosova question has found a particular treatment in the current history textbooks of Albania. Kosova is seen as an Albanian region unjustly separated by the decision of the Conference of London in 1913.

The political, economic and cultural history generally dominates the textbooks currently in use in Albania. There are not noticeable differences in this respect for different historical periods.

Balkan history also, is represented in the textbooks of Albania. However, in the framework of the total of the teaching hours of history it takes only 36 hours, which cannot be considered sufficient.

By including Balkan history into the textbooks it is aimed at presenting a general view of the main moments and events of the neighboring peoples. The moments and events having a particular connection with Albanian history are explained more than the others. Not only the moments of collaboration, but the problematic ones as well, are largely reflected. Particularly, the injustices made towards Albanians, partitioning and annexing intentions towards their territories, are pointed out with a criticizing tongue.

On the history textbook for the fifth grade (republished for the third time in 1998), where a reader can find information on Ancient and Middle Ages, the history of Balkan countries, to my opinion, gets framed in some optimal proportions. Within fourteen chapters that the book has, three chapters belong to the ancient history of Balkan countries.

But the History 6 textbook (a text for the sixth grade of elementary school), republished in 1998, brings out a dif-

ferent view of that seen in the textbook for the fifth grade. This text treats the world history of Modern Times (1492-1918). In spite of the fact that in the text there are themes bringing information on the history of Asia, Africa or Latin America's countries, it is hardly left any space for Balkan countries' history. Being aware of the fact that a lot of historical processes in the region are closely limited to some important events or moments of European history, it is absolutely necessary to fill this gap.

The same thing would be said in respect to the history textbook of the seventh grade (History 7), published in 1996. This text that treats the recent world history, has 18 chapters, two of which belong to Balkan history after the First World War. The seventh chapter treats the most important moments of the Balkan countries after the Second World War. Within 53 teaching hours that this subject occupies, 5 hours are left for the history of the Balkans (approximately 10% of total hours).

But in this case, we could make the following remark: considering the new geopolitical realities in the Balkans in the above mentioned chapters dedicated to contemporary Balkan history, the history of Turkey which in that period was seen as a Balkan country, must be treated, thing that is not done.

History 1 for the first grade of gymnasium, which treats the world history of ancient and medieval times, seems to have optimal proportions concerning the inclusion of Balkan history into the general structure of the text. From that point of view, I feel optimistic for the part that belongs to the Medieval times but however there is a scarcity concerning church history and strong state formations as Bulgarian monarchy or Serbian monarchy. Otherwise, in the History 2 textbook, the contemporary history of Balkan countries has an adequate reflection.

Being aware of the importance that the knowledge of Balkan history has, I would like to suggest to consider the possibility of including a special subject into curricula for gymnasiums in Albania. This new subject would be entitled History of the Balkans and its curricula would be constructed according to the demands of the level of education in our country.

Albanian textbooks today should be reviewed in accordance with the changes in the political, economic and social fields of Albanian society. It could be very fruitful to include into this work chiefly the open-minded teachers and historians coming from new generations. But it is yet difficult to avoid the pressure coming from old fashioned teachers and scholars who not rarely, have the support of the official circles. The authorization, publication and distribution of textbooks in Albania are official responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science and its dependent institutions such as the Institute of Pedagogical Studies and the Publishing House of Schoolbooks.