

Book Review / Рецензия книги / Buchbesprechung
by Heiko Schrader

Joseph Zaida, Tatyana Tsyrlina-Spady & Michael Lovorn (Eds.) (2017): *Globalization and Historiography of National Leaders. Symbolic Representations in School Textbooks*. Dordrecht: Springer Science+Business Media. [ISBN 978-94-024-0974-1; ISBN 978-94-024-0975-8 (e-book); DOI 10.1007/078-94-024-0975-8; 283 pp. (cloth edition)]

This book, being volume 18 in the series “Globalization, Comparative education and Policy research”, provides a global overview of selected research on the social, cultural and political construction of national leaders and the symbolic representation in school history books. The approach chosen is based upon the assumption that meanings derive both from text and images and impact upon students’ perceptions of nations. Methodologically, the book is based upon discourse analysis, multimodal analysis and social semiotics on national leaders. The approach considers their construction and symbolic representation within the dimensions of national identity and patriotism, democracy and ideology on one hand and globalization on the other.

Structure of the book

The book consists of 17 chapters, divided into two parts. The first part with a chapters deals with research trends in globalization and historiography of national leaders: symbolic representation in school textbooks of Europe and Russia, the second part with a chapters of Asia and the rest of the world. All chapters provide a similar structure concerning theoretical background, literature review, methodological approach and research design and data analysis.

Content of the chapters

The first chapter is an introduction of the editors on globalization, historiography, and national leaders. They argue that, from a sociological and cultural-theory perspective, “the construction of national identity is grounded in culture, historical narratives and memory”. Scholars emphasize the importance of teaching national history to make students understand their national roots and identity and educate them to become engaged citizens with critical thinking - the more progressive approach - or educate them to nationalism and patriotism - the conservative approach. The editors stress that there is only a limited number of literature concerning national heroes: political and military leaders providing role models for the youth. How national heroes are celebrated and described (accuracy and objectivity, weighting, types and tone of (re)presentation, visualization in graphic representations (color, size, technique, genre, etc.)) deserves deeper analysis, which this book aims at. Another topic of interest is which school textbooks are chosen by selection committees according to which criteria. This concerns the political circumstances, freedom of choice, the role of the state aiming at nation-building, and so forth. This topic is of course up-to-date when we consider, for example, the biased rewriting of history books in Russia, Poland, Turkey or India. Old heroes are eliminated and new ones emphasized depending on which narration has to be created. The constructivist field of nationalism is wide, covering lyrics and epics of such heroes, the national anthem, public holidays, museums and monuments. Heroification of the past increases an ideological bias in this classroom and may even suppress deeper discussion.

Part one begins with a contribution on Putin's Russia. Tatyana Tsyrlina-Spady and Alan Stoskopf consider the nostalgic revival of Stalin and the elevation of Putin as a national hero in the state-controlled media, and civic education system. They argue, since Putin has gathered control over virtually every sphere of life, he's able to reconstruct and rewrite the past through patriotic language and imaginary. The school curriculum for history aims at celebrating the Russian and the Soviet glorious past. The hero appears as savior (defense of religion, culture, science and motherland), as unifier (in the face of internal and external enemies threatening the nation), and as leader (for safeguarding timeless Russian virtues and the health of the nation to reconstruct, or even bring greater glory in present and future. The analysis of two school textbooks from 2016 shows a constructed link from Stalin to Putin to enhance Putin's heroic leadership, justify and obscure Putin's own violations of civil liberties and human rights, and blame opposition to leadership as unpatriotic and hazardous for the welfare of the Russian nation.

Dorena Caroli investigates the Soviet cult of personality between 1938 and 1962. She emphasizes that through the different periods of Soviet history schoolbooks underwent a number of adjustments. The analysis shows that various falsifications occurred with regard to the terror of Stalin and the opponents of Lenin and Stalin, as well as the number of victims of World War II. The analysis also shows the iconography of political leaders, particularly Lenin and Stalin, alongside with hammer and sickle, and heroic images of workers and proletarian masses to symbolize the victorious October revolution, the victory of the Bolsheviks, the five-year plan, World War II and the defeat of fascism. Lenin's double image of mortality and immortality (his tomb at Red Square) offered a model for Stalin's own personality cult as a "father" with super-human qualities (I suppose that also Putin might have learned from it). The analysis of the textbooks shows the construction of Lenin's and Stalin's personal qualities and their outstanding role in the interpretation of Marxism, communism, and class struggle. Their iconography shows "sacred" aspects of the cult of personality. The personality cult came to an end after 1956 by scrutinizing Stalin's achievements compared to his terror regime. This also brought an end to the personality cult of Lenin.

Andrea Průchová analyzes Czech history books in communist and post-communist times, with regard to the role of the father of Czechoslovakia, T. Masaryk and his orientation towards Western democracies. The two types of textbooks provide significantly different images of the president. While the post-communist textbooks celebrate him as the successful founder of Czechoslovakia, communist textbooks avoid such image and also do not refer to any political elite. Instead they perceive the emergence of Czechoslovakia as a result of anonymous masses - the filtered interpretation in line with Marxism-Leninism and the October Revolution - and considered the formation of Czechoslovakia as having been induced by Western capitalist states. This filter in turn influences the iconography, so that national(ist) symbols were avoided in the communist textbooks, while being extensively used in the post-communist ones. The author concludes that systematic interest in visual media of memory, particularly in history books, should be strengthened.

Anne M. Wingenter reflects upon Mussolini in five contemporary Italian high school textbooks. Recently, Mussolini and fascism have extensively been discussed anew, and some scholars take up the regime's perspective of lived experience while downplaying the black side. Alongside, a variety of popular histories, films, and biographies of Mussolini have been produced and too often provide the nostalgic, sympathetic image of nationalism. Some contributions, however, reject the view of "the evil German" and "the good Italian" by comparatively measuring Nazism, Stalinism and Italian fascism, and showing that Italian violence has been downplayed in the collective Italian memory. Recent attempts of rightist parties revive revisionist views and a glorification of Mussolini. The analysis of the textbooks shows that in general they do not display such a transfiguration of fascism, but some books perceive Mussolini as having been distanced from most violent and criminal aspects of the regime. Wingenter, however, holds that once we consider the effects of such transfigu-

rations, it is not enough to analyze such history books; more important is to investigate how the teachers work with such in the classrooms.

Next, Ramón Cózar Gutiérrez and Manuel Roblizo Colmenero investigate national leaders in Spanish textbooks. Spain experienced a colonial period, a fascist period, and a Civil War until it developed into a Republic. The authors hold that fortunately the contemporary textbooks do not only discuss national heroes and antiheroes such as Columbus, Charles I, Franco, Juan Carlos or Adolfo Suárez but also a number of real figures still being alive, and even anonymous ones such as, for example, trade unionists, all of them shaping modern republics life. The authors hold that even anonymous people may qualify for heroes; I would even put it the other way around that this downplays the personality cults of others.

In Chapter 7 Dobradchna Hildebrandt-Wypych discusses the (re)construction of Polish national identity by investigating a historical figures, Queen Jadwiga, the first female monarch, and her symbolic (female) representation of Polish Catholicism, and J. Pilsudski, the creator of the 20th century Second Polish Republic, who supported a multicultural Poland and symbolizes the Polish struggle for national independence. Discourses about these two heroes coexist and even rival. The analysis of the textbooks shows that both discourses emphasize a particular Polishness, however, with two different faces. One face is the glorious, victorious and powerful Poland, the other one is an unstable and fragile Poland. Since the 19th century, the Polish nation claims a moral mission of defending the civilized future of Europe and its Christian civilization (particularly Catholicism). From this perspective, the European dimension of nationalism is unquestionable. The author emphasizes that certain aspects which do not fit Polish national heroism are left out in the textbooks. Both figures are presented as defenders of an endangered continuity of the metaphysical paradigm of Polishness and freedom, although they are separated by centuries.

Camille Duprac, John Barzman, and Elizabeth Robert Barzman discuss history textbooks for French high schools, and the subtitle of the contribution: "Events, long-term trends, Europe and skills, not national leaders" already shows that France has downplayed national heroes in the past 35 years, and instead engendered non-French role models (women, writers, artists and scientists). The authors discuss the representation of these non-French actors and how France came to the point of abolishing heroism. Indeed, old history books were a sequence of French national leaders. Of this long list only Napoleon (named with his family name Bonaparte now) survived as major topic for the first and second grades, and De Gaulle for the "terminal" grade. Other French heroes were not really abolished, but play a minor role on the backstage in the earlier school years. The sequence of national heroes does no more deliver the structure of modern history text books. More significant are now long-term trends, primary sources and European and world reality. The only exception is De Gaulle who qualifies as a French, a leading actor and hero.

Finally, Cătălina Mihalache concludes the first part by discussing the role of Stephen the Great in Romania in nine recent and contemporary textbooks. He is the most stable anchor of modern Romanian historical culture and developed from a regional to *the* national hero after the collapse of communism. Interestingly, both Romania and the Republic of Moldova claim to be his heirs. The author discusses the selectivity of representation, neglecting his human side and instead emphasizing tragic and heroic details such as political disappointments. The tragedy determines the setting of representation. A taboo is the double discourse both in Moldova and Romania, because a pro-Romanian unionists' visions and a pro-Moldovan autonomist vision exist side by side. Furthermore, the representation is monolithic and does not apply multiple perspectives. Since ideologies shall be supported, factual information is insufficient. The ideological connectedness to Europe is upheld by a militant Christian profile in opposition to the Muslim Ottomans. But the nationalistic and patriotic discourse of success is dominant in the narrations. The author summarizes that obviously such a narrative is satisfactory for the masses, since no one is interested in changing this presentation.

The second part of the book on “Asia and the rest of the world” begins with the contribution of Michael Lovorn with the title: “The politicization of US history textbooks: reinventing Ronald Reagan”. He observes that in election periods candidates draw relations to former presidents from their political camp. For the Republicans Reagan symbolizes better times, better leadership and a “greater America”, due to his different roles as all – American boy, actor, cowboy, defender of faith and family and fighter against communism. This icon has been constructed throughout the past years. So the question comes up, how he should be represented in the historical school books. Therefore, the author compared three school textbooks of different political stance concerning Ronald Reagan’s life. He identifies one book as a “feel-good Ameri-superiorist, nationallist narrative”, lacking criticism of Reagan’s policies. The second book takes a much more critical stance, however, also contributes to such an image. The third book is a counter narrative, giving voice to the non-establishment, presenting a one-sided perspective just from another angle. So, none of the books takes a comprehensive stance, so that the author concludes that history books are “not an account of what happened, but rather what we say happened”. He aims at textbooks which do not sell nationalist narratives, but instead educate scholars for the critical thinking and investigation.

Next, C.C. Wolhuter, J.L. Van den Walt, and E.J. Potgieter discuss the „Representation of national leaders in history books and textbooks in South Africa: a trabsutuikigtucal study”. They take the year 1994 as the marker for comparing which history school books existed before and afterwards. The analysis shows that not only for schoolbooks of the first, but also of the second period, inclusive positions are absent. Contemporary history textbooks should reflect the diversity of voices in South African history, including those who were responsible for, and defended apartheid, as well as those who were marginalized. Also it seems that publishers aim at reflecting the political majority but do not take a multifaceted perspective. Indeed, such books have to refer to key actors, but they should not take one-sided choices.

The next contribution of Wangbei Ye compares national heroes and national identity education in mainland China’s and Hong Kong’s textbooks. In a number of contemporary societies national identity and local autonomy stand against each other. Since 1997 Hong Kong has struggled to integrate into the PRC under the “one country and two systems” policy. Therefore, it provides an interesting case to examine which national identity policy occurs when the city enjoys different legal rights, compared to mainland China. The author considers two primary school books, one from Hong Kong and one from the mainland, in order to investigate how the Hong Kong textbooks deal with tensions between local autonomy and national cohesion. The analysis shows that textbooks from mainland China show a combination of culture-oriented and communist national identity education model, which outlines the Communist Party as the bringer of China’s glorious modernization. On the contrary, Hong Kong’s education textbooks are local centered and take a more neutral stance towards national heroes, both cultural as well as communist. They are less indoctrinating scholars but aim at their cognitive knowledge.

Chapter 13, written by Ambreen Shahriar deals with “The master narrative indoctrinating patriotism: national heroes and Pakistani school textbooks”. Pakistani history is celebrated in almost all subjects. Here, the major emphasis is on Islamic history and Islamic heroes from more ancient and modern times. Patriotism is addressed when talking about partition and the formation of Pakistan and propagating negative feelings towards India. The author investigated the representation of national heroes in both English and Urdu language textbooks for secondary and high-level education, authorized by the Sindh Textbook Board. She discusses the heroes during partition in the late 19th and early 20th century and during the war against India after the creation of Pakistan in 1947, who are dealt with in a rather isolated way. The author outlines that every narrative concerning a particular hero follows a master narrative of heroism which scholars internalize - the story of hard-

ship and struggles of the creation of the country, of sacrifice for freedom, and the celebration of soldiers.

Next follows a discussion of Shabana Khattak and Hussein Akhtar on gender mainstreaming in textbooks in Afghanistan with reference to Malalai of Maiwand. Under the Taliban regime Afghanistan had experienced a ban of women from public life. The new constitution from 2001, however, has encouraged gender mainstreaming in all facets of life. The government developed a gender sensitive and anti-discrimination curriculum and textbooks for schools and colleges. Though not being suppressed before the Mujahedin and Taliban period, women were related to household chores and mostly illiterate, except those from the ruling class who contributed to poetry and literature. The textbooks take up these historical figures for encouraging women to actively participate in society. Malalai is a symbol of women empowerment in history textbooks of Afghanistan, due to the character, patriotism, courage and leadership skills. The authors hold that she is exaggerated in her importance, because there are not so many contemporary women who can stand as a role model, but that such role models are needed for Afghanistan. These could take up Islamic women's role models and relate to the wives and daughters of Prophet Mohammed, for example.

Nina Bardasarova and Larissa Merchenko discuss two national heroes in history textbooks of Kyrgyzstan, Kurmanjan Datka and Mikhail Frunze. The former lived during the time of the Russian Empire, the second played an important role in the Russian revolution. The authors argue that, once such heroes are presented in history books, they have to be contextualized, because otherwise students do not learn critical thinking about the past and present. The Soviet textbooks highlight the struggle of Kyrgyz and Russian people against social and national oppression, but hardly mentioned, Kyrgyz historical actors not fitting into the class struggle conception. Therefore, Datka is not mentioned at all, while Mikhail Frunze was celebrated as a revolutionary hero. Since 1991, Marxist methodology for the study of history was abolished, but nevertheless there is still a lot of Marxist rhetoric in the books. For example, political and economic factors are still considered the major drivers of history, while cultural and intellectual factors are considered less important. The Kyrgyz Russian relations are most controversial in the contemporary books. Datka, however, is reduced to a gendered stereotype, presenting her as a supportive and faithful wife and devoted mother, but not as a politician. Frunze in turn lost his Soviet Revolutionary touch and has become a Kyrgyzstan national historical figure, mentioned very briefly. The authors conclude in comparison of the two periods that the perspective of liberation of the oppressed, Kyrgyz people has been substituted by the dominant narrative of Kyrgyz statehood and independence. The reduced narratives about the heroes do not foster a critical stance towards a controversial past and would require reflexive teachers to broaden the scope of the scholars.

Chapter 16, written by Deborah Henderson, John Whitehouse, and Joseph Zajda, investigates the portrayal of John Curtin, Australia's wartime Labor Prime Minister. The authors stress that historical thinking requires the capacity to establish historical significance, which has to become an explicit part of learning and teaching. They explore the historical context of a key article on Curtin's decision-making during the war as well as the representation of his leadership. Curtin stressed a change in policy by presenting the United States as a new source of hope for the Australian public and to draw closer to the US as a war necessity but nevertheless to maintain the ties with Britain. In other words, while the latter policy refers to continuity, the former stresses change. The authors underline that this key article makes students contextualize the historical situation and understand his decision-making out of this context.

The final chapter 17, written by the editors, summarizes the research trends and findings. They highlight that the value of this book is comparative research, related observations in dispersed case studies that stress how textbooks not only severely influence students, but also teachers of how to build their curricula. Heroification of national, political, and military figures without contextualiza-

tion misses the chance of a critical education. The different chapters outline heroes with diverse faces, gendered, religious or secular, ancient and modern, ideological, and neutral, and they also discuss the role of history schoolbooks in fostering national identity among young students, creating a sense of national belonging and pride. In the case the only exception is France which broke with the conception of heroic personalities. The editors summarize the major trends of the case studies as follows: (1) ancient heroes are created or re-created, at the boundary between historical figures and myths; (2) crimes and atrocities of such heroes are often downplayed for the sake of streamlined nationalist role models; (3) history textbooks are used to legitimize national policies and institutions (this is particularly visible with a change of ideologies from communism to post communism); (4) some studies link nationalism with faith (Poland, Rumania, Pakistan); (5) other studies aim at creating a larger alliance or affiliation, like “Europeanization” in France of Poland; (6) the Afghanistan and Kyrgyztan cases outline how female heroes are used as a strategy of gender mainstreaming; (7) some of the case studies highlight the particular role of pictures and illustrations in such textbooks, which may influence the rapid reader even stronger than the texts; (8) many history textbooks still function as a tool for ideologies, providing biased perspectives by highlighting particular aspects and downplaying others; such biased books leave little space for own interpretations and formation of opinion and require excellent history teachers to close that gap.

Recommendations

No doubt, the book is an excellent example for contemporary research on the historiography of national leaders. Although it is structured into two parts according to geographic aspects, these parts do not provide two controversial positions but show more or less universal trends in the selection of history textbooks. In so far, such a division might engender wrong expectations and is therefore not really necessary.

To whom do I recommend this book? First of all, to educationalists, particularly those who are concerned with history, but of course also other school topics, since very often used ideologies cut across school subjects. Secondly, I suppose that historians with a broader regional or even world perspective will find a lot of interesting material discussed in the case studies. Third, the examples from Europe provide rich information for teachers and students of European studies. For me, a sociologist, it was a pleasure to read and review this book. I frequently teach on constructivism, on nation-state building, ideology and identity formation in young post-communist and post-colonial states. My summary highlighted the constructivist perspective by referring to the different heroes. A summary of the methodology used in the different researches would have exceeded the space for such a review. However, the given structure of the different chapters would equally allow summarizing methodological proceedings of the authors, who applied contemporary qualitative methodology in critical discourse analysis, content analysis, social semiotics, and other methods. This might even broaden the readership and include all such disciplines working with text and/or picture.

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