

## Portrayal of Ottoman Empire in Iranian High School History Textbooks

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### Abstract

This article focuses on how the relations between Ottoman and Iran, which are important states of Islamic history, are discussed in Iranian high school history textbooks. The shadow of collective belief and identity constructed through history education reverberates across the fields of international and foreign policy. Past relations affect two peoples not only politically but also socially and culturally, which mostly manifest themselves in the field of education. The way bilateral relations are addressed in textbooks directly affects the way two peoples perceive each other. The aim of this study is to determine the portrayal of the Ottoman Empire in Iranian high school history textbooks in terms of the relationship between history and identity. Document analysis was used to collect data from high school second- and third-grade history textbooks published between 2017 and 2018. A descriptive model was used. Qualitative research method was used for data collection, analysis and interpretation. Iranian history textbooks depict the Ottoman Empire as a neighboring state that sees itself as the protector of Islam and pursues anti-Shiite politics because it does not want a strong state in its east. They also portray the Ottoman Empire as an aggressive and opportunistic state that uses the internal weaknesses of the Iran State, which sees itself as the protector of Shiism.

**Keywords:** Islamic Republic of Iran, History Textbooks, Perception, Identity, Othering

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## INTRODUCTION

Perception is a multi-faceted concept and a process in which stimuli are converted into meaningful experiences through our sensory organs. This experience, that is, perception, is a common product of stimulation and process. The transmission of stimuli to the brain by sensory organs is defined as sensation while making sense of internal and external stimuli through sensations is defined as perception. The Dictionary of Psychology defines perception as a simple state of consciousness acquired by sensing stimuli. The dictionary of the Turkish Language Association defines perception as the state of awareness and recognition of something by directing attention to it. The Dictionary of Sociology (Ozankaya, 1980) defines it as the effect of stimuli on sensory organs and their reflection in consciousness. In psychology, perception is defined as a process in which the brain analyzes stimuli together with their relationship to other stimuli around them and comprehends them as meaningful integrals. This is the process by which stimuli are understood. Unlike sensation, which is a simple physiological process, perception is a complex psychological phenomenon.

Perception is defined as a process in which independent sensory data are converted into a meaningful whole to understand stimuli (Cüceloğlu, 1996). Perception is unique to living things. Perceptual characteristics can be derived from the relationship between different stimuli and experiences or perceptions arising from those stimuli, and theories can be developed on perception in line with those inferences (Arkonaç, 1998, Coren et al., 1993). It is, however, impossible to observe perception directly, and therefore, the validity of those theories can be assessed only indirectly. Friman (1999) addressed Pepper (1967) to analyze perceptual actions and the interaction between emotions and the environment and argued that an object and an observer are necessary for perception to occur. When someone says, "I see a chair," the chair becomes an object and he/she becomes an observer (Friman, 1999). Perception enabling us to see the chair presents the stored information in our brain and allows us to make an informed choice among numerous classified and comparable decisions. Contrary to common knowledge, it is not actually the eyes that see. What makes sight possible is actually the brain. If the visual processing center of the brain is damaged, it cannot send messages to the eyes, which, therefore, cannot see. Kpicharmus (450 BC) stated 'What sees is mind, what hears is mind, the ear and eye are deaf and blind (Coren et al., 1993). Sensory information is acquired in two ways; progressive learning and asymmetrical learning. Progressive learning is education from infancy to adulthood involving inherited and acquired features. Asymmetrical learning is an educational process from childhood to adulthood, involving religion, business life, conflict and friendship, associations, heroes, leaders and fears, desires and anger (Godlewski, 2010; Godlewski, 2009). Learning shaped by the developments around it begins at birth and continues throughout our lives.

Perception has long been a preoccupation of philosophers tackling the questions on the source and validity of knowledge. Numerous philosophers have addressed the nature and process of perception and its value as a source of information and revealed many perceptions that look different from each other (Hacikadiroglu, 1984). Epistemologists have explored whether there is a real world that is independent of human experience, and if so, how it can be learned and how its authenticity or accuracy can be determined. One of the basic questions is what the truth is, for which there is no definitive and "correct" answer. Discussions concerning the answer to the question usually end in "it depends." The answer to the question can be reached on the basis of social structure and consensus and belief (Friman, 1999). Starting from the concept of "truth," perception refers to conscious experiences among objects (Coren et al., 1993). Something which is right for someone might be wrong for him/her in a different situation. Similarly, something which is right for someone might be wrong for someone else. The truth varies from region to region, from country to country, even from person to person, and therefore, there is no single truth. Therefore, the perceived truth vary from person to person (Friman, 1999). People's perceptions of things, therefore, vary according to the region, culture and individual.

Another philosophical debate is whether perception is innate or learned. While such nativist thinkers as Descartes and Kant argue that perception is innate, empiricist thinkers such as Berkeley and Locke argue that individuals develop perception skills through their experiences with objects

around them. However, many contemporary psychologists think that both arguments have some merit. However, no one denies that practice and experience affect perception. Therefore, whether perception is innate or learned is still a moot point (Source, 1990). How perception occurs is more important than what perception is. In this process, perception causes differences among individuals depending on some factors.

It is mostly psychologists who have explored the scientific foundations of perception. They regard perception as a basic mental process (Gun, 2005). Perception organizes and interprets sensory data. It is a meaning-making process for external stimuli (Arkonaç, 1998). Perception can also be defined as mental interpretation of external stimuli. Perceptions show us what we see, how we interpret, what we believe and how we respond. Our perceptions create values in our minds and set and solve problems. Numerous psychologists characterize our perceptions that have such a powerful feature as real (Johansson and Xiong, Willimon, 2000). Perception affected by expectations and motivational situations categorizes the behavior and motives of other people in mind to update its prior knowledge with additional information in order to realize social perception (Arkonaç, 1998). Body language, words, clothing style and environment are the factors that affect perception. The combination of all these factors creates a value in the perceiver's mind and allows him/her to make inferences (Baltaş, 2007).

Sensory data are brought together to make a meaningful whole to understand or interpret them (Eren, 2010). Sensory data become neurophysiological energy at the sensory level at which perception starts. Genes and experiences affect perception the most. Perception is both a combination of innate and acquired skills and a result of the development of innate skills through learning (Arkonaç, 1998, Turk, 2014). The external information obtained, organized and processed allows people to develop a number of theories, assumptions and ideas about the world and adjust their behaviors and attitudes accordingly (Eren, 2010, p. 69).

In his study "Perception Warfare," Friman (1999) states that Miller (1956) argues that perceptions are limited to skills and knowledge. In the same study, Friman (1999) also states that Simon (1987) argues that beginner and expert chess players use different moves and tactics. This shows that knowledge and skills play a critical role as they allow some people to find practical solutions to problems for which others have been unsuccessful because perception is affected by mental state, experiences, needs, conditioning, information, expectations and social environment. Everything we see, hear, taste, touch, smell and experience is affected by experiences, expectations, environment, interests and needs. Meaning and perspectives are formed through perceptual processes. Everyone perceives the environment in a special way through mental knowledge. Therefore, perception is actually a personality reaction. These processes are also active in the foundations of civilization and culture. Culture, social and individual values, aesthetic values and habits shape perception. The behaviors resulting from perception also play an important role in the establishment and development of culture. Therefore, culture and perception affect each other. Past impressions and experiences affect new perceptions. External stimuli are fundamentally established ideas or beliefs that assume a role in the processing of data in the brain. Fundamental beliefs allow people to filter information and assign meaning to them (Köroğlu, 2009). Perception affects people's attitudes to facts or events. People's reactions vary according to their perceptions. The way we react to any situation depends on our perception. People's feelings for and reactions to a situation depend on how they interpret it and what they think of it. The situation itself does not directly determine feelings and reaction but perception is mediated by emotional response (Beck, 2015).

About two thousand years ago, Epictetus, a prominent stoic, stated that people are affected not by things but by how they perceive and make sense of them (Arslan, 2008). External stimuli and interactions are observed and evaluated at the level of consciousness, a connection is established between past and present experiences, and actions are designed accordingly. Therefore, perception varies from culture to culture and from individual to individual. People tend to organize their experiences and assign meaning to them. This trend is determined by culture, expectations, needs, unconscious tendencies, value judgments and conflicts. However, opinions, assumptions, theories and

ideas change over time because perception is continuous. New experiences, discoveries, beliefs, convictions and theories allow the processing and comprehension of new knowledge, which may cause people to change their minds or abandon their beliefs altogether (Eren, 2010).

Perception is a meaningful, systematic and total reaction of an organism to a stimulus. Perception is the result of senses and based on previous experiences and knowledge. Perception is, therefore, a personality reaction. The most important symptom is that one becomes aware that one's senses belong to a particular stimulus. The fact that one develops a perception of a stimulus means that one knows about that stimulus. The proverb "out of sight, out of mind" also confirms that our perception depends on closeness, acquaintance and relationship.

State formation gave birth to the concept of sovereignty. It began with the 1648 Westphalia Treaty and reached a peak with the French Revolution based on the concept of imagined community described by Benedict Anderson (2004). As he puts it, a nation "is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." The assessment of the creation of imagined communities through the concept of sovereignty has resulted in the formation of "us" and the "other." Othering involving the negative abstraction that foreigners are different from us feeds off of this ground (Habermas, 2005). The interactions and education that we have had since childhood lead us to develop stereotypes about others (Semnani et al., 2012). International relations that should be based on feelings, sensitivity and ethical values are unfortunately overshadowed by prejudices due to the policies of nation-states (Levinas, 2003). International conflicts and colonialism and imperialism have deepened the gulf between peoples. Although technological developments and economic arrangements in the twentieth century made borders obsolete, they have failed to destroy the prejudices and negative portrayal of the other.

According to Durkheim's social theory, boundaries are defined and grouped through the concepts of "within-group" and "without-group." Socio-psychological definitions help us to distinguish between us and them and to keep people within the group. Ideals are philosophically the most important constituent elements on which the method used by modernity is based. As Neumann (1996) states, the self and the other should be defined to establish social boundaries. Beavers (1990) argues that the other has to exist as much as the meaning we attribute to it and limited to the way we construct it. Therefore, othering is used to justify the clash of civilizations, the Cold War polarization and discriminatory colonial policies.

According to the post-structuralist theory, identities, and therefore the Other, are produced by people. This leads to the use of discourses in daily life to produce meanings, to construct identities, to establish social relations, and ultimately, to carry out political and moral transformations because discourse has an important normalization capacity in itself. Normalization provides a background for predicting, and hence, normalizing the information that is intended to be accurate. Concepts produced within the framework of these discourses can be used to produce perceptions that are in sharp contrast to each other. Basing our relationship with the other on ethical values allows to eliminate negative perceptions (Levinas, 2003). What is meant by discourse here is not only verbal signs, but also photographs, texts and films. Concentrating on discursive practices enables us to recognize how truth and knowledge are produced together with political military and economic practices. Discourse analysis is a very important tool for researchers to understand and scientifically explain how, and most importantly, why an event or situation occurs (Doty, 1996).

### **Textbooks as a Means of Constructing Perceptions**

Textbooks, which have an important place in educational institutions, are one of the most cost-effective and useful means of disseminating information and values to large audiences. Through the information and values that they include and exclude, textbooks are instrumental in constructing social reality from a certain perspective. The main problem with textbooks is about the information and values that they disseminate. Textbooks cover only a tiny fragment of the ideas, values, and

knowledge of a culture. The knowledge and values in textbooks are a result of complex cultural, economic and political processes that make up the social structure of a given period (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991; Moses, 2010). Education policy selects only a portion of the universe of knowledge and values and organizes and eliminates them and places them in textbooks. McLaren (1989) states that no educational policy is politically and ideologically innocent. The concepts of school knowledge, curriculum and textbooks are, in a sense, intertwined with issues of gender, class, other, culture and power. Therefore, history is often considered a controversial subject since it is often used to shape a national identity and to create a particular image of the past and the other for future generations. Through implicit or explicit value judgments, the content of textbooks legitimizes the status quo. The stories of the past provide a context and perspective for today's events. Eclectic textbooks develop a line of logic that explains and justifies and reproduces the current social order. History textbooks often exalt certain identities while conjuring up the image of a glorious past and offer less information about the struggles and mistakes of the dominant group in society. Glorifying one group and demonizing or ignoring the other and interpreting historical events in favor of a particular agent is often a state policy.

The first studies on textbooks focused on stereotypes and xenophobia within the framework of the League of Nations after World War I. With the establishment of UNESCO after World War II, it was concluded that textbooks should have a content that strengthens international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples, and hence, universal peace. A Handbook for the Improvement of Textbooks and Teaching Materials as Aids to International Understanding published in 1949 set a series of criteria for the first time. After the World Wars, It was recognized that textbooks had nurtured hostility between nations and contributed to the bloody conflict in the past. A history teaching focusing on military achievements, in particular, plays an important role in the construction of “friends” and “foes” and “us” and the “other.” Research on textbooks focused on the elimination of elements that could provoke hostilities to prevent at least some of the conflicts that might arise in the future (Şimşek & Alaslan, 2014).

History textbooks are instrumental in both creating a perception. According to Wirth, textbooks misuse history. Wirth lists the forms of misuses of history as follows;

**Denying Historical Facts:** This method is often used and also promoted by the state. States deny facts due to the pressure of the international community. National history does not include certain “unfortunate” events to make people forget about them.

**Misleading:** False evidence is produced, and any material can be used as false evidence. In this age where images are of paramount importance, all kinds of falsification can be easily performed. Images are distorted. This tactic is increasingly used thanks to new information and communication technologies. Documents are falsified and destroyed, or historical events are presented in a distorted way. Countries join the national collective consciousness or misuse history by producing false evidence for their own reputation and interests.

**Focusing on a Specific Event:** States or nations focus on a particular event to divert people's attention to make them forget about a different historical event.

**Omitting:** Some information is ignored or omitted. Some parts of a historical event are not discussed.

**Misuse of History Due to Laziness or Ignorance:** Researchers do not update their information. Opinionated and narrow-minded scientists often commit this type of misuse.

**Misuse of History for Commercial Interests:** Clichés, biased information and ideologies are imposed through the media. Authors do their own publicity to increase the sales of their books that contain nonacademic information (Wirth, 2003).

### **Ottoman-Iranian relations**

The House of Osman emerged as a frontier principality in the second half of the thirteenth century and rapidly expanded its geographical boundaries eastward and westward. The Ottoman dynasty conquered Istanbul and took almost all of Anatolia under its rule in the second half of the fifteenth century and became neighbors with the Aqqoyunlu, Qaraqoyunlu, Safavid Empires in the east, and with the European Empires in the west. The Safavid Empire was founded in the sixteenth century (1501-1508) in Persia. The first political relationship between the Safavid and Ottoman Empires began with the Safavid ruler Shah Ismail defeating the Aqqoyunlu State and making Tabriz the capital in 1502 (Kunt et al., 1997).

The main factor determining the relations of the two states was sectarianism. Partially religious conflicts took place between Safavid Shiite Iran and Sunni Ottoman Empire as both of them concerted efforts to expand their sphere of influence. The Ottoman Empire considered the growing influence of the Safavids on the Shiite tribes living within its borders to be a security problem. Therefore, the relation between the two empires shifted from political sphere to battlefields. Selim I took measures to prevent Iranian Shiite influence as soon as he came to power. Before his expedition to Iran, he eliminated many Kizilbashs, who were Safavid supporters. With the Battle of Chaldiran that ended with a decisive victory, the Ottoman Empire interrupted the Safavid Empire's search for influence, albeit for a while and took control of Erzincan and Erzurum, which were of strategic importance. The Safavid Empire, on the other hand, entered a period of serious crisis (Emecen, 2003). Tahmasp I sought ways to increase his influence over the Shiite Turkmen groups in Anatolia, which led Suleiman I, the then Ottoman Empire, to a two-year expedition to Iran in 1534. During the first Irakeyn expedition, Suleiman I entered Tabriz. On its way back, The Ottoman Empire developed relations with Uzbek Muslims in eastern Iran to strengthen its role as the protector of the Sunni world against Shia Iran. Following the expeditions in 1548 and 1553, Tahmasp I of Safavid Iran and Suleiman I of the Ottoman Empire signed the Peace of Amasya in 1555 (Kılıç, 1997). Following the three great and costly expeditions during the time of Suleiman I, the Ottoman Empire put pressure on the Safavid Empire and drew a natural border by building castles and defensive lines in the conquered regions.

Despite several incidents, the two Empires remained loyal to the provisions of the treaty until the Ottoman Empire attack in 1578. However, the Safavid Empire faced political instability after the death of Tahmasp I in 1576, which encouraged the Ottoman rulers for war. Although some Ottoman rulers, especially the Grand Vizier Sokullu Mehmed Pasha, advised against breaking the peace, the Ottoman Empire declared war on Iran in 1578 and won a decisive victory and reached its widest borders in the east with the Treaty of Constantinople signed on 21 March 1590. After the subsequent wars, the Two Empires signed the Treaty of Nasuh Pasha (1612) and the Treaty of Serav (1618). The borders defined by the Treaty of Zuhab (1639), which were signed between the two Empires after Murad IV's expedition, are still valid. The peace treaties signed in 1736 and 1747 also accepted the terms of the Treaty of Zuhab (Colak, 1976). The Treaty of Zuhab determined not only political, but also religious, economic and demographic borders between the two empires. Long-lasting wars were costly for both empires. Although the Ottoman Empire somehow managed to finance the wars, it went through tough times. Especially the taxpayers of Anatolian cities had to make serious sacrifices to finance the wars.

### **Iranian Education System**

The modernization process of the Qajar dynasty is in many ways similar to that of the Tanzimat period of the Ottoman Empire. The Qajar dynasty implemented reforms on education as a result of economic and political developments. Dar'ül-Fünûn was founded in 1851 by Emir Kebir. It was the first higher education institution established in western style to train experts in science and technology. Having been the first secular educational institution to employ European teachers, Dar'ül-Fünûn was also the home of intellectuals who would later pioneer modernization in Iran. The

reformists who wished to break the influence of the Ulama on education and law regarded education as an obligation of the state, which led to a duality in the socio-political structure of Iran. As in all examples of westernization, law and education were critical areas for secularization and modernization (Aşık, 2006).

With the transition to the constitutional regime in 1911, all educational institutions gathered under one roof and the number of western-style schools increased. During the Pahlavi dynasty (1925-1979), radical changes were made to improve, accelerate and modernize education for nation state building. Top-down reforms in all areas of daily life as well as in education led to a counter reaction in certain segments of the Iranian society, which turned into social protests from 1963 on and resulted in the 1979 revolution (Asl, 2007, Limbert, 1987).

The post-revolution regime made fundamental changes to education. This time, education became a means of Islamizing the whole system and raising new people in line with Islamic values. Colleges and universities were shut down to restructure the education system in accordance with the ideology of the new regime. Gender segregation was implemented at all primary and secondary schools. The Cultural Revolution Committee was established in 1980 to restructure and supervise the education system within the framework of Islamic values. New educational goals were set, new curricula were developed, and Islamic-based teaching materials were included in primary school curricula and textbooks within six months of the revolution. The philosophical transition that began with the 1979 Revolution created some changes in the attitudes and goals of the regime due to the economic demands and labor force necessities of the 1990s. The regime wished to strike a balance between the desire for cultural and spiritual independence from the West and the desire to be successful than the West (Arani et al. 2012).

Pre-university education in the Islamic Republic of Iran is 12 years (5 years of primary school, 3 years of secondary school, 3 years of high school and last 1 year of pre-college preparation). The Iranian education system, which has a dynamic nature, was restructured by the Ministry of Education again. Curricula, textbooks and school time were redesigned. Since the 2016-2017 academic year, 5-year primary education has been increased to 6 years and 4-year high school education has been reduced to 3 years. In this way, the 12-year education period has been  $6 + 3 + 3$ .

In Iranian education system, high school is considered critical because it lays the foundations of philosophical, psychological and social life. According to the curriculum determined by the Ministry of Education, high school education has numerous religious, moral, scientific and educational, cultural-artistic, social, political and economic objectives. High school is a bridge between basic education and higher education and a transition period from general education to vocational education and prepares many people for social and professional life. Therefore, any success or failure at high school level directly affects the Iranian society (Safi, 2011). High school courses are offered within the general curriculum. Iran is composed of provinces, and therefore, geography textbooks contain information about each state.

As with other revolutionary societies that undergo rapid social and political transformations, so with Iran, textbooks, especially books of social sciences, were regarded as key transmitters of the values of the new regime. This importance attributed to textbooks is also obvious from the fact that they were modified right after the revolution. (Mehran, 2015). Especially books on history, economics, sociology and psychology were modified and all textbooks were rewritten in accordance with the ideology of the revolution in two years. History textbooks also play an important role in students' learning experiences. History textbooks are used more than other textbooks. They are, in a sense, curricula in Iran, as in countries that focus on building a national identity and instilling a sense of belonging (Moses, 2010). Therefore, their impact and role in lessons is more evident. Second, they teach citizens the official ideology of the state. Finally, they reconstruct people's past and image of national unity (Shorish, 1988). Iranian textbooks have been revised from now and then. Within the framework of this revision, a new curriculum and new books have started to be used as of 2016-2017 academic year. The textbooks which were previously 23x16 cm were increased to 27x20 cm.

## Literature

There are numerous studies on Iranian textbooks. Some of them focus on Western image and representation of religious values in textbooks (Shorish, 1988; Matini, 1989; Mehran, 1989). Those studies reported that textbooks imposed Shah's understanding of the West and focused on Persian culture while ignoring Islamic culture. Zarean's (1998) research on the portrayal of the ideology of the 1969 revolution and of the Islamization of Iran in textbooks complements these studies.

There are also studies focusing on history textbooks to address the post-revolution Iran. Yazdanjoo (2012) explores how political and religious authorities used textbooks to make history teaching dependent on their own policies in the post-revolution Iran. Zadeh (2012) examines how history textbooks teach Iranian identity and history. Soltan Zadeh (2012) focuses on the use of history education to build Iranian national identity.

There are some Turkish researchers investigating the Iranian education system and textbooks. Kendirci (2006) focuses on the portrayal of religion and citizenship in Iranian primary school textbooks. Batan (2011) examines written and visual elements in Iranian primary and secondary school textbooks in order to analyze how Turks and the concept of Turkishness is portrayed in Iranian education system and policies. Celik and Celik (2015) and Cencen (2017) identify the discourses regarding Turks in the secondary school textbooks of the post-revolution Iran. There are, however, no studies investigating how Iranian high school history textbooks portray the Ottoman Empire.

## Research Objective

The aim of this study was to determine how the Ottoman Empire is portrayed by Iranian high school history textbooks. The study sought to find answers to the following question:

What kind of discourses regarding the Ottoman Empire do Iranian high school history textbooks have? Are these discourses consistent with historical data?

## METHOD

The aim of the study was to determine how high school history textbooks in the Islamic Republic of Iran depict the Ottoman Empire. A descriptive model was used. Qualitative research method was used for data collection, analysis and interpretation. Qualitative research is defined as a research method in which qualitative data collection techniques such as observation, interview and document analysis are used and perceptions and events are presented in a realistic and holistic manner (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2004). Qualitative research is based on an interdisciplinary holistic perspective and adopts an interpretative approach to the research problem. Qualitative research addresses phenomena or events within their contexts and interprets them in terms of the meaning that people attach to them (Altunışık et al., 2010). Pingel (1999) states that quantitative and qualitative methods can be used in studies on textbooks. Quantitative methods focus on components such as how many times a word is used or how much space is devoted to a topic in a text. The qualitative method focuses on a deeper understanding and analysis of a text within its own context. Pingel (1999) identified four qualitative methods for textbook analysis: (1) hermeneutic analysis used to decipher hidden meanings in texts, (2) linguistic analysis examining (key-) words and terminology with controversial meanings, (3) intercultural analysis focusing on representative studies of controversial issues and taking into account both sides of the discussion and (4) discourse analysis used to determine what topics are important, what main themes are revealed and what values are suitable.

Data were collected using document analysis. Document analysis is the analysis of written materials containing information about a phenomenon (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2004: 153). Textbooks are documents used in educational research. The following steps were taken to analyze the textbooks: (1) Current high school history textbooks used in Iran were obtained, (2) the sections concerning the



Ottoman Empire were translated from Persian into Turkish and (3) narratives and visuals about the Ottoman Empire were analyzed using discourse analysis (Pingel, 1999; Gee, 2005).

## Results

The second-grade history textbook attaches special importance to the Safavid period in terms of Iranian history. It states that the Safavid Empire turned Shiism into an official sect, brought about an economic recovery and transformed Iran into a politically, geographical and socially integrated state. It also states that Iran developed political, economic and cultural ties with its neighbors and European states during that period, which had serious repercussions in the region and in the international arena (History 2). The Ottoman Empire became a staunch defender of Sunnism as a counter maneuver against the Shiite-ization of the Safavid Empire (Kunt et al 1997).

“Selim I became the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire and dispatched his large army to Iran. Although Selim I was looking for ways to expand his territory, he was actually worried and afraid of the establishment of a strong Safavid state. The two armies met in the plain of Chaldiran and the Shah's soldiers fought with courage. However, they could not stand before the firearms of the enemy (960) and, Tabriz, the capital of the Safavid Empire, fell under Ottoman occupation for a while” (History 2: 139).

The difference between the old and new textbooks is that the pejorative terms and stereotypes in the former have been replaced by more objective descriptions and explanations in the latter. For example, the old textbook described Selim I as “uncompromising, ruthless and stone-hearted” (History 271/3 1389: 32) but the new textbook does not contain just descriptions. Although the narrative texts do not contain such expressions, some reading texts do. In the activity regarding the reasons behind the defeat of the Battle of Chaldiran, Selim I was described as someone who is “eager to shed blood” quoted from page 288 of the *Sefernâme-i Venizyan* by Katrinuznu (History 2: 138).

In the activity, students are given two quoted texts and they are asked to compare them and interpret what kind of conclusion can be drawn. The *Sefernâme-i Venizyan* states that Iranian soldiers were in disarray because they lacked good command. Shelling the Iranian army by order of Sinan Pasha, the Ottoman army triumphed and immediately began plundering. It also argues that if it was not for the cannons, the Ottoman army could not have survived the Iranian arrows. The excerpt from *Tarih-i Elçi-i Nizam Şah* by Hurşah bin Kubad Hüseyinî states that Iranian soldiers fighting fearlessly from dawn to dusk could not make a move against the enemy because they were out of ammunition (History 2: 138). The result that students can draw from those two texts is as follows: It is not courage and genius but military technology that won the Ottoman Empire the battle and If the Iranian army had had the same opportunities, it would have defeated the Ottoman Empire.

The grade-two history textbook describes the period of Tahmasp I, who ascended the throne after Shah Ismail's death, as the period during which the Iranian State grew stronger. After Shah Ismail's death, his son Tahmasp I ascended the throne at the age of two. “The Safavid Empire was going through political turmoil in the early years of his sultanate. On the one hand, the leaders of the Kizilbash provinces were a law unto themselves and struggling with each other, and on the other hand the Uzbeks were attacking from the east and the Ottomans from the west to the Iranian territory (History 2: 138). Tahmasp I immediately took over the internal affairs and neutralized the Kizilbash leaders. Then he defeated the Uzbeks and drove them to Khorasan. He took systematic measures to repel the Ottoman attacks. During his reign of 54 years, Tahmasp I secured the Safavid rule with a cautious and appropriate policy both within and without” (History 2: 139). As stated in the narrative text, the Safavid Empire was under attack by its eastern and western neighbors due to the weakness caused by political and economic turmoil. The fact that the text states that the Safavid Empire repulsed the attacks as it grew stronger shows that the text portrays both neighbors as opportunistic.

“The history of Iran after Tahmasp I is discussed as follows: During the short reign of Ismail II and Mohammad Khodabanda after Tahmasp I's death, the Safavid Empire again plunged into

political turmoil. When Abbas the Great ascended the throne (996), the Safavid Empire was going through domestic and foreign political turmoil. On the one hand, the Kizilbash leaders were fighting each other for their own personal interests, on the other hand, the Ottoman Empire was invading Iran territories. In the east, Horasan was targeted by the Uzbeks.”

1. “Ensuring political military and internal security: the Kizilbashes were suppressed.
2. Formation of new military organizations: Until Abbas the Great, the Safavid army was composed of the Kizilbash of different provinces, and they were always pursuing their own interests” (History 2: 139).

In the Ottoman historiography, the Kizilbash is perceived as a great threat to Ottoman-Iranian relations. The narrative text also describes the Kizilbash as a threat to the Safavid Empire, suggesting that the Safavid Empire shares the same view of the Kizilbash as the Ottoman Empire, albeit implicitly.

The textbook also addresses the Ottoman-Iranian relations in the reign of Abbas the Great, which witnessed economic, social and cultural developments. “The enemy desperately left Iranian territory: Abbas the Great firstly suppressed the Kizilbash and then began to prepare to strike great blow on his external enemies. He thought that it was difficult to withstand the Uzbeks in the east and the Ottoman Empire in the west. He, therefore, made peace with the Ottoman Empire and sent troops to Khorasan to take heavy blows to the Uzbeks and defeated them. Then he defeated the Ottoman army with the sudden attacks of the Safavid cavalry that he sent to Azerbaijan and reclaimed the entire western Iran and Iraqi region. Another victory during the reign of Abbas the Great was the expulsion of the Portuguese from the Persian Gulf. Until then, the Safavid Empire lacked naval power. With the help of British ships, however, Abbas the Great reclaimed the Persian Gulf coast, which had been occupied by the Portuguese for a century” (History 2: 140).

The question “Why do you think the Ottoman rule had stopped for two centuries and why couldn't resist the rebellion of small groups in 1135?” posed during the activity “Think and answer in connection with the subject” draws attention to the period of stagnation of the Ottoman Empire (History 2: 142).

The text addresses the Safavid-Ottoman relations under a separate title. “When the Safavid dynasty came to power, the Ottomans was already a considerable power. The Ottoman sultans regarded themselves as the Caliph, highest position in Islam, and representative of all Muslims. The Ottoman army quickly advanced on European soil. The Ottoman Empire saw the Safavid State as a threat to its expansionist policies. A few years after Ismail I came to power, Selim I, the Ottoman Sultan, headed towards Iran with a large army to eliminate the Safavid State. The Ottoman army slaughtered the Shiites in Anatolia and then defeated the Iranian army in Chaldiran. Other Ottoman sultans also fought the Safavid Empire many times, but the Safavids put up resistance and managed to stop the Ottomans. As a result, the Ottoman rulers were forced to end the war and make peace with the Safavid Empire” (History 2: 145).

Students are encouraged to make inferences with the question “What do you think would have been different in the Islamic world if peace had prevailed over war between the Safavid and Ottoman Empires? Please discuss” in the activity “evaluation and judgment” after the narrative text (History 2: 145).

The text points out two factors that developed relations between the Safavid Empire and European states. The first factor is that the Ottoman Empire determined the relations with Europe and Iran, which is expressed in the textbook as follows; “The attacks of the Ottoman army on European soil led the European states into alliance with the enemies of the Ottoman Empire. The European states became allies and collaborated with the Safavid Empire to stop those attacks” (History 2: 146). This can be considered a political reflection of “the enemy of my enemy is my friend.”

The textbook quotes from page 172 of *Sefernâme* by Sanson in the activity “comprehension and inquiry” performed after the narrative text. “No answer was as cute as the answer given to Iranians by German, Polish and Russian deputies, who were ready to cooperate with Iran against the Ottoman Empire. The Shah of Iran, however, promised the Ottoman sultan that he would maintain peace” (History 2: 147). With reference to this text, students are asked to describe how the Safavid Empire's political relations with its neighbors and European countries could be defined.

The textbook “Iranian and Contemporary World” is taught in the last years of high school in Iran. The book begins with the introduction of sources on contemporary world history and then addresses the Afsharid dynasty after the fall of the Safavid dynasty and the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the developments to date. The text titled “Iran from Nader Shah to Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar” addresses the relations with the Ottoman and Russia. Internal disorder arose with the fall of Isfahan and end of the Safavid rule. “The Afghans failed to establish sovereignty due to the inability of the Safavid Empire to dominate the whole country and the inexperience of state administration. The Russian and Ottomans Empires, which seized the opportunity, occupied our lands from the north and west. These conditions created the necessary environment for the liberation of Iran under the leadership of an Afsharan commander named Nadir Shah.” (History 3: 16). The text argues that the situation turned in favor of Iran after Nadir Shah's succession to the throne and defeat of the Afghans several times and describes it as follows: “Nadir then waged wars against the Ottoman and Russian Empires. He defeated the Ottoman army several times and reclaimed the occupied territories. Seeing the military power of Nadir, the Russians retreated without putting up a fight” (History 3: 17).

The text states that Nadir Shah agreed to ascend the throne on some conditions. “...Nadir Shah brought the notables of the country together and told them his conditions to ascend the throne. One of the most important of his conditions was to put an end to sectarian conflicts with the Ottoman Empire.” After he ascended the throne, he exerted much effort to eliminate political and sectarian conflicts with the Ottomans. He tried to achieve this sometimes through war and sometimes through peace but was unsuccessful due to internal and external turmoil that the Ottoman Empire was going through” (History 3: 18). The text states that the internal and external problems under Nadir Shah's rule were less than in the Safavid period. The most important international problem in this period was the political and military conflicts with the Ottoman and Russian Empires, which weakened the Iranian State in many ways (History 3: 22). The textbook states “a peace treaty was finally signed between the Iran State and the Ottoman Empire, despite Ottoman statesmen's opposition to Nadir Shah's efforts to end sectarian conflicts. Peace was maintained until Zindiye soldiers occupied Basra in the last period of Kerim Khan” (History 3: 21).

According to the text, Nadir Shah aimed to solve the problems arising from sectarian differences between and the Iran and Ottoman Empires and did not see this only as an external problem. The text states that Nadir Shah summoned 70 Sunni and Shiite clergymen from different parts of Iran under the name of Najaf Council in Najaf in 1643. The council accepted Shi'ism as the fifth true sect and Caferism as a true denomination that has common practices with the Shafi'i sect (History 3: 18). This shows that the problems arising from sectarian differences are seen not only as an international issue but also as an internal issue for Iran.

The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Ottoman history third grade textbook addresses the problems arising from sectarian differences within the context of Eastern Politics of European States and their consequences under the title of “The Sick Man of Europe: The Ottoman Empire.” “In the eighteenth century, the Ottoman Empire ruled vast territories from North Africa to Eastern Europe. When the Afsharites came to power in Iran, the Ottomans were in the period of regression due to the presence of various minorities and denominations on large territories, their harsh policies over tribal and sectarian minorities, involvement of the harem in domestic politics and disruption of the military system. Russia, Britain, France and Austria were involved in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire under the pretext of protecting minorities, which made the Ottoman State even weaker. In fact, in the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire started to be referred to as the “Sick Man of Europe.” The Ottoman Empire focused on reforms and scientific endeavors to prevent further weakening and

also opposed Nadir Shah's proposal to establish a single sect in the Islamic world. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire coincided with the rise of European states. This allowed the growth of influence of European politics on the East” (History 3: 25).

The unit describing the period of the Qajar dynasty addresses the relations between the two countries in the context of the developments taking place independently of them, which is rather noteworthy. The text continues under the title of “Ottoman”: During the Qajar period, the two Muslim countries, the Ottoman and Safavid Empires, were in constant conflict with the European states, and therefore, had no strength left to continue hostility between each other. Despite the border disputes during the period of Fath-Ali Shah Qajar and Mohammad Shah Qajar, the Ottoman persecution of Alevis and trade problems between two countries, a peace agreement was signed between the two states through the mediation of Russia and Britain.

“Apart from political issues, there were commercial and cultural ties between the Ottoman and Iranian Empires. The Ottoman Empire introduced Iranian culture to Europeans. In the last period of Qajar, a new political and military order emerged in Europe. Although the British and the Russians hated the Iranian people, the Ottoman state attracted the Iranians with the slogan of Islamic unity.” (History 3: 46).

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The aim of this article was to determine how the Ottoman Empire was portrayed by Iranian high school history textbooks written based on a revised curriculum. The results show that the textbooks are more improved than they were in the past but that they use the methods of misleading, omitting and denying, which are three forms of misuses of history. It is no coincidence that the most controversial issues in the Iranian history textbooks, albeit rich in information and visuals, are conflict between the Safavids and the Ottomans such as the Ottoman–Persian Wars and struggle for influence in the Caucasus and the Middle East. These issues are controversial because both states try to justify their actions. In that context, Iran became the political embodiment of Shia Islam while the Ottoman Empire assumed the political leadership of Sunni Islam. Both states willing to expand their spheres of influence often came into conflict. The Safavids tried to have an influence on the Shiite tribes living within the borders of the Ottoman Empire while the Ottoman developed relations with Uzbek Muslims in the east of Iran. The narratives in the textbooks allow us to better understand how both states took advantage of each other's weaknesses.

The Iranian high school history textbooks state that the Ottoman Empire wishes to expand its sphere of influence to achieve its imperial objectives and sees the existence of a strong Safavid State as an obstacle to that end. According to a text comparing the military power of the two states, the Ottoman army is more organized and contemporary and has heavier artillery than the Iranian army whereas Iranian soldiers are braver and can shoot arrows better than Ottoman soldiers, however, they are disorganized because they have no good command. The text also states that the Iranian army was defeated because it ran out of ammunition and portrays the Ottoman state as a looter and opportunist due to its post-war actions and policies towards the internal turmoil in Iran in the era of Tahmasp I. The portrayal of the Ottoman Empire in the Iranian high school history textbooks is similar to that in the Iranian secondary school textbooks (Batan, 2011; Çencen, 2017; Çelik & Çelik, 2015). The text also argues that the Ottoman Empire had to end the war and sign a treaty with Iran because Shah Ismail's successors strengthened Iran's military power.

The reign of Selim I and Ismail I witnessed sectarian polarization. In that context, Iran became the political embodiment of Shia Islam while the Ottoman Empire assumed the political leadership of Sunni Islam to expand their spheres of influence, bringing the two states into conflict. Both states had to deal with many devastating consequences due to that polarization, which continued for decades. During his reign, Nader Shah wished to make Jafarism the dominant sect in Iran to end the sectarian conflict between the two states. In order to bring the two states closer, Nader Shah sent letters and ambassadors to Mahmud I to persuade him to accept Jafarism as the fifth sect of Sunnism. However,

Nader Shah's efforts came to a dead end because of the opposition of the Ottoman ulema. Therefore, the Iranian high school history textbook portrays the Ottomans as an empire whose policies are driven by sectarian fanaticism. Although the struggle between the Ottomans and the Safavids is generally perceived as a Sunni-Shiite conflict, it is actually political competition between the two states. However, the Iranian high school history textbook glosses over the social, economic, military and geopolitical aspects of that political conflict with sectarian cloud.

Although the Iranian high school history textbooks posit Iran and the Ottoman Empire as being at opposite poles, they have many common features. The Ottoman Empire is generally unwilling to wage war on multiple fronts at the same time. If it finds itself in that situation, it returns from one of the fronts as soon as possible even though the outcome is far from ideal. Iran also follows the same policy of not waging war on multiple fronts at the same time. After closing the eastern front, the Ottoman Empire deployed its army to the western front. Similarly, the Safavids turned to the east after ensuring the security of the western front. In line with this policy, the Safavids launched multiple expeditions on their Uzbek neighbors in the east as soon as their armed conflict with the Ottomans came to an end. As is known, the Ottoman Empire perceived Qizilbash as a threat to its rule. The successors of Ismail I also regarded Qizilbash as the main cause of many years of internal turmoil, and therefore, took harsh measures against it.

Iranian high school history textbooks are based on an understanding of history education in which certain values and strategic interests are disseminated to the whole nation through dramatic cases. Iranian history textbooks fictionalize the past in line with today's needs and concerns, use current concepts to make the past understood and regard today's problems as critical means of contextualizing the past. These books are the manifestation of Iran's desire to "become a great power" that shapes its current foreign policy. The textbooks explain Iran-Ottoman relations through Iran's security and strategic interests and its fight against atrocities against Ottoman citizens of the Shiite sect. The textbooks depict the Ottoman Empire as a neighboring state that sees itself as the protector of the Sunni Islamic world and pursues anti-Shiite politics because it does not want a strong state in its east. They also portray the Ottoman Empire as an aggressive and opportunistic state that uses the internal weaknesses of the Iran State, which is the representative of Shiism. According to the textbooks, the expansionist policies of the Ottoman Empire towards the West led the European states to develop political relations with Iran, and therefore, the Ottoman Empire was, in a sense, instrumental in introducing Iranian history and culture to Europe.

Despite their different social and political characteristics, Turkey and Iran feed off of the same cultural basin. Relations between the two states go back a long way, and they have common, commercial, strategic, and religious ties. Strengthening relations between the two states and societies is, therefore, important for the future. Based on the results, the following suggestions can be made:

For a more peaceful history teaching, both countries should adopt the principle of addressing their past conflicts in an accurate, complete, impartial and non-provocative manner and using a scientific and judgment-free language in their textbooks.

For fruitful relations, and stability and peace in the region, the two countries should develop cultural cooperation and establish joint commissions in order to replace the othering and biased language of textbooks with a more positive, peace-promoting and integrative one.

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