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Black Hours and Golden Age in Armenian History Textbooks

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Budapest, January 15, 2025

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I. Chapter

I/A. Introductory notes

Textbooks play a crucial role in the study of history, as they document significant historical events and narratives, shaping the understanding of the past for future generations. By analyzing textbooks historians can show how history has been told in various eras, emphasizing narrative shifts, additions, omissions, and the influence of textbooks on the formation of national identity. Textbooks are regarded as primary sources in historical research due to their role in shaping collective memory, preserving memory and history, and national identity.

My research question is what in Armenian History textbooks were presented and characterized as Black Hours and Golden Age and how are the same historical events presented in textbooks in different periods? Precisely, Black hours refer to the difficult, hard, and sufferable times for Armenians. The contrary Golden Age refers to the flourishing times of Armenian history. I chose the title Golden Age and Black Hours comparing two different sides of historical events, similar to the project of Georg Eckert Institute “*Black Hours and Golden Times - European Urban Fates. Three case studies,*” where three cities were studied “in their most difficult situations - the black hours - and at their peak - the golden times.”¹ The project was mostly about the pasts of three European Capitals of Culture: Essen, Krakow, and Vilnius. This was done to show how different European history is. The goal was to provide different perspectives on shared European history, cultural connections, and conflicts while moving beyond current national borders, and to encourage a more inclusive and open understanding of Europe’s past.

I selected Armenian history textbooks from five different periods. These include the Tsarist Period, which refers to textbooks used in Armenian schools under Russian Imperial rule; the Ottoman Period, textbooks used in Armenian schools within the Ottoman Empire; the Soviet Period (Brezhnev, Gorbachev period), textbooks used during the Soviet period; the Diaspora Period, a textbook used in the Armenian diaspora in Tabriz, Iran; and the Post-Soviet Period, contemporary textbooks used in the Republic of Armenia.

The importance of this research is that it helps to understand how Armenian history textbooks construct historical memory and national identity and to see how “Black Hours” and

¹ Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, “Black Hours and Golden Times,” accessed January <https://www.gei.de/en/research/projects/black-hours-and-golden-times>.

“Golden Age” are presented in different periods. By analyzing the textbooks this research aims to contribute to the understanding of how history was and is taught in societies.

My research covers a deductive approach to content analysis, which means that first the specific theory was decided, precisely I already knew what kind of research field I should deal with. I focused on the method of comparison of different textbooks. It includes qualitative and quantitative content analysis. Also, the content is analyzed in the context of emotions, such as how the events are presented and influence the readers because they are part of national identity creation.

I/B. Actuality of the research

Recent debates surrounding history textbooks highlight deeper geopolitical and societal tensions. Modifications in Armenia’s international relations and engagements with neighboring countries are termed the evolving vector of Armenian foreign policy. The ongoing debates regarding Armenian History textbooks reflect discussions about how history is taught and interpreted. This research looks at history textbooks to understand better how history has been and is being taught in Armenian society.

In January 2024, the Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan stated that he agreed to the suggestions of some teachers and scientists to change the name of the subject of Armenian History (Hayots Patmutyun) to History of Armenia (Hayastani Patmutyun). During his speech, he said that he was shocked and blamed himself for not noticing that subtlety.² As mentioned in OC Media, *“There is a very serious difference in the deep content because the history of the Armenian people implies the history of the absence of statehood with episodes of the existence of statehood, and the history of Armenia implies a history of statehood with episodes of the absence of statehood,”*³ said Pashinyan. In Armenia Times Newspaper the Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports Araksya Svajyan explains it in this way, *“In many countries, the focus is on studying the history of the country, not just the history of its people.”*⁴ From this, we can see that Armenian history covers much broader periods, the history of Armenian people regardless of where they lived. The history of Armenia is mostly connected

² The Armtimes, «Հայոց պատմություն», թե՛ «Հայաստանի պատմություն». ինչու է առաջարկվում անվանափոխել պատմության դասագիրքը ["History of the Armenians" or "History of Armenia"? Why is it suggested to rename the history textbook?], January 23, 2024, www.armtimes.com/hy/article/278499

³ OC Media, "Change of School History Subject Title Stirs Controversy in Armenia," January 24, 2024, <https://oc-media.org/change-of-school-history-subject-title-stirs-controversy-in-armenia/>

⁴ The Armtimes, «Հայոց պատմություն», թե՛ «Հայաստանի պատմություն». ինչու է առաջարկվում անվանափոխել պատմության դասագիրքը ["History of the Armenians" or "History of Armenia"? Why is it suggested to rename the history textbook?], January 23, 2024, www.armtimes.com/hy/article/278499

to the history of the modern state, which means focused on the history of the Republic of Armenia whose geographic horizon is the South Caucasus.

To this question, was also not indifferent the Department of Armenian History of Yerevan State University. It criticizes that based on some unknown historians' requests, but they are not sure if they exist, the draft of the changes immediately emerges and is put up for discussion. The department regards all this as the project initiators' ignorance of some realities or political considerations.⁵

I/C. Introduction of primary sources

Armenian history textbooks from 1862 to 2024 serve as the main sources.

Ottoman Armenian Textbook: In the history of the Ottoman Empire, the forty years from 1839 to 1878 are known for a set of reforms collectively known as Tanzimat, which means "reorganization or reform." It was for the modernization and Westernization of the Ottoman state. During those times the millet system was created which denoted the non-Muslim communities. Every millet had complete control over its internal affairs. They were allowed to preserve their traditional customs, laws, and institutions. The Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople was the main institution of the Armenian millet. The patriarch had the authority to permit the construction and repair of churches, monasteries, schools, and printing establishments.⁶ By 1866 there were 46 Armenian schools.⁷

The role of Armenian education and national identity became significant. Originally from Constantinople in the Ottoman Empire, ten textbooks offer insights into the educational and historical narratives of the period. These are the 1862, 1863, and 1866 textbooks, titled "Textbook of National History," authored by Stepan Perch Poghos-Papazyan, who was a teacher. In 1860 started to write textbooks for his students. But Armenian writer Hakob Paronian did not like his writings describing them as very short.⁸ The textbooks published in 1875, 1879, and 1887, titled "Textbook of National History starting from Hayk to the time of Christ" were written by Mkrtich Y. Cholagean.

⁵ Aravot Newspaper, «Փոփոխությունը հիմնավորված չէ». ԵՊՀ Հայոց պատմության ամբիոնը՝ «Հայոց պատմություն» առարկան անվանափոխելու վերաբերյալ ["The Change is Unjustified" – The Department of Armenian History at Yerevan State University on Renaming the Subject History of the Armenians], July 17, 2024, <https://www.aravot.am/2024/07/17/1433075/>

⁶ Richard Hovhannisian, *Armenian People from the Ancient to Modern Times*, vol. 2 (New York: Macmillan, 1997), pp. 182-185

⁷ "The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute" Foundation, "Western Armenian Education," Online Exhibition, http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/online_exhibition_13.php

⁸ Baronian, Hagop. *Collected Works*, Vol. 2 [Երկերի ժողովածու, Հատոր 2-րդ], 1964, pp. 117-126, [https://hy.wikisource.org/wiki/Ինքնա:Հագոօ_Բարոնյան_Երկերի_Ժողովածու_2_\(Հակոբ_Պարոնյան_Երկերի_Ժողովածու_2-րդ\).djvu](https://hy.wikisource.org/wiki/Ինքնա:Հագոօ_Բարոնյան_Երկերի_Ժողովածու_2_(Հակոբ_Պարոնյան_Երկերի_Ժողովածու_2-րդ).djvu)

In Constantinople, Minas Gabamachean, a teacher, published three textbooks in 1888. They are: “New Textbook of Armenian History, for National School,” “Armenian National History, for the use of secondary school,” and “Armenian History for National Schools.” Davit Khachkonts’s textbook, “Illustrated and Cartographical Armenian History,” was published in Constantinople in 1910. It was an elementary school textbook. The same author also wrote “Illustrated Armenian History,” a textbook for intermediate courses A 1912 and B, in 1910.

Armenian textbooks from the Russian Empire: Between the 1730s and 1828 Armenia was dominated by Persians, but many Armenians, particularly businessmen and merchants lived in Georgia, mostly in Tiflis. In 1801 Russia took over control Eastern Georgian Kingdom which was the beginning of its campaign to have control over Transcaucasia. After the treaty of Gulistan, which caused the end of Russo-Persian war (1807-1813), a large Armenian population was under Russian rule. Before the 19th century, the church was responsible for all young Armenians’ education. But Caucasian Armenians had no school before the Russian annexations. The government established the first schools: the noble uchilishe (school) in 1802 and Orthodox seminary in 1816, both in Tiflis. The most important Armenian community in the Russian Empire was in Tiflis, the seat of the Caucasian government.⁹

From this context we have three textbooks emerged in Tbilisi: The “Armenian History for Parish Schools,” written by G. Vantsyan, was published in 1906; “Textbook of History,” written by Ash. Tumanian and Kar. Mirianian in 1911 which was for Parish Schools as well; Sahak Toreosyan’s 1916 textbook for secondary schools, “Textbook of Armenian History.”

Soviet Armenia textbooks: While this period is defined as a dictatorship of one party in the 1920s, the policy of korenizatsiia (rooting) or nativization encouraged members of local nationalities to run their republics. As it is said as a result of korenizatsiia “Armenia became more Armenian, in the 1920s.” A new school system was created to teach children, a network of seven-year village schools was established, and special schools for workers in 1924-25. In 1916 Yerevan State University graduated its first 35 students. After the death of J. Stalin education made Armenians more eager to explore the world and experience what modern life offered, as “*Stalinism prevented people from fully achieving their potential.*”¹⁰

Textbooks published in Yerevan during this time have the same name, “History of the Armenian Nation.” The first is from 1951, then the 1965 textbook for the 8th grade. 1973 for 8th grade. The author is Prof. S. P. Poghosyan. 1989, a textbook for secondary schools' 9th-and

⁹ Richard Hovhannisian, *Armenian People from the Ancient to Modern Times*, vol. 1 (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), p.109

¹⁰ Richard Hovhannisian, *Armenian People from the Ancient to Modern Times*, II Volume, (New York: Macmillan, 1997), pp.355-369

10th-grade students. The authors are B.N. Arakelyan, Ts.P. Aghasyan, and V. A. Parsamyan. The same textbook, edited by V. A. Parsamyan in 1992, is for 7th- and 8th-grade students.

Armenian Textbook of Diaspora (Iran): Armenians have lived in Iran for 1,700 years. Numerous refugees migrated to Iran under the circumstances of Armenian Genocide in 1915. They lived in Tehran, Tabriz, Abadan, Isfahan, and Rasht and were the largest community. The important fact is that they had the opportunity to be autonomous, which means the preservation of culture, having their own educational centers.¹¹ From this period we have one textbook titled “Short History of Armenia,” published in 1926, Tabriz.

Post-Soviet Armenian textbooks: Contemporary education in Armenia of course differs. Nowadays history books teach about national, spiritual, and moral values, as well as the importance of traditions in keeping Armenian identity alive. They also talk about the great cultural achievements of Armenia and their place in Armenian culture and culture around the world.¹² We have textbooks from 2013 and 2014 for 7th-, 8th- and 9th grades, entitled “Armenian History.” From 2023 and 2024, Smbat Hovhannisyan’s textbook “Armenian History,” has been highly criticized.

The following Black Hours and Golden Age events are explained in each textbook according to the period in which they occurred. Black Hours include the Fall of the Artashesian (Artaxiad) Dynasty (11 BC), Armenia without a king (261-286), Armenia’s division between Persia and Rome (387), Tamerlane’s first invasion (1386), Armenian Genocide (1915).

Events of the Golden Age include the Reign of Tigranes the Great (140-55 BC), the Adoption of Christianity (301), the Creation of the Alphabet (405), the Agreement of Nvarsak (484), the figure of Davit Bek (1722).

II. Theoretical framework

II/A. Textbook research

In the 1920s the League of Nations recognized the importance of studying and comparing textbooks from different countries. After World War II UNESCO took over the responsibility of continuing to revise history textbooks and worked on several textbook research projects mostly with countries that had border issues. In 1925 International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation under the League of Nations published reports that focused on

¹¹ Hovhannisian, Volume II, 421-422.

¹² Mnatsakanyan, Armine, and Péter Récsei. *Changes and Challenges in the History Education of Armenia*.

comparative analysis of textbooks to avoid “essential misunderstandings of other countries” in the future.¹³

Georg Eckert as a historian at the Braunschweig Pedagogical University after World War II cooperated with different foreign history teachers to promote comparative textbook research. In 1951 he founded the International Institute for Textbook Improvement, which after his death was renamed Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research.¹⁴ By enhancing the way history, geography, and civics are taught in textbooks, the institute seeks to advance international harmony and understanding. It looks at how identities are influenced by textbooks.¹⁵

School textbooks are the dominant definition of the curriculum in schools and represent political, cultural, economic battles and compromises. Textbooks are “*conceived, designed and authored by real people with real interests’ and are published within the political and economic constraints of markets, resources and power.*”¹⁶ Many studies done in different countries are divided into three main categories:

1. Ideology in textbooks: Textbooks contain information about certain subjects. Textbook research mainly focuses on studying what information it is.
2. The use of textbooks: This part is about how books are used by teachers and pupils.
3. The development of textbooks: As the author notes, textbooks have a long “life cycle.” This means that textbooks are being conceptualized, written, edited, and selected before landing on the pupils’ desks. So, this is about their creation and development.¹⁷

Textbooks, as primary sources for historiography, reveal the values of society, shape the teaching of history, and help us understand how people view and remember the past. Textbooks are not just educational tools, but they operate at the intersection of culture, pedagogy, publishing, and society. They serve multiple roles: as educational resources, ideological vehicles, and even cultural artifacts that reflect the values of society.¹⁸ What is important here is that they include the information that the government wants to be. In other words, they are

¹³ Falk Pingel, ed., *UNESCO Guidebook on Textbook Research and Textbook Revision*, 2nd ed., revised and updated (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2009), 9, in conjunction with the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research.

¹⁴ Pingel, 63

¹⁵ Pingel, 65

¹⁶ M. Apple, *Official Knowledge: Democratic Education in a Conservative Age* (London: Routledge, 1993), as cited in *International Journal of Historical Learning, Teaching and Research*, vol. 3, no. 2 (July 2003): 5.

¹⁷ Egil Børre Johnsen, *Textbooks in the Kaleidoscope: A Critical Survey of Literature and Research on Educational Texts*, trans. Linda Sivesind (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1993), 28.

¹⁸ Johanne Lebrun et al., “Past and Current Trends in the Analysis of Textbooks in a Quebec Context,” *Curriculum Inquiry* 32, no. 1 (2002): 54, Blackwell Publishing.

instruments of the politics of the history of a government. The function of the textbook is to tell the children what their elders want them to know.¹⁹

Textbooks are part of the “organized system of society.” Historical knowledge, transformed through generations, that contains certain events, facts, or figures known to members of certain societies constitutes historical canon. They present the information that according to society is true and legitimate. As Professor of Cultural Studies, Fred Inglis notes, “*They help set the canons of truthfulness and, as such, also help re-create a major reference point for what knowledge, culture belief, and morality really are.*”²⁰ By saying society it does not mean all the people, but special groups, which influence the writing of the history. Canons can only be of some value for the functioning of cultural memory when they are handed on from to generation, and educational institutions are of primary importance in this process.²¹

Canon is criticized as it is seen as a reflection of the biases of powerful groups. Critics argue that canon hides the bias by presenting choices as being about quality or universal value, but it just serves the interests of the dominant group.²² However, critique of the canon is regarded as unnecessary for cultural studies. Cultural studies require a return to the canon, as “*canons preserve rich complex contrastive frameworks which create [...] a cultural grammar for integrating experience.*”²³ So, returning to canon means that it allows one to connect with ideas and stories from the past, creating a shared understanding across different generations, and helping rebuild collective memory.²⁴

The concept of canon plays a crucial role in shaping how textbooks present an accepted version of history influencing what societies consider important in shared memory. While the term canon appeared in the 18th century, the idea existed long before, when ancient Greeks called it “*hoi enkrithentes*” which means “those that are admitted” into special groups, supported by authority. In history, canon is an accepted version of events, figures, and ideas that make a shared memory. In modern history, canon is what history textbooks, commemorations, and collective memory share.²⁵

¹⁹ Stuart J. Foster and Keith A. Crawford, eds., *What Shall We Tell the Children? The Life and Legacy of a School Librarian* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2000), 4.

²⁰ Fred Inglis, *The Management of Ignorance: A Political Theory of the Curriculum* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 22-23.

²¹ Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, eds., *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, in collaboration with Sara B. Young (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 312.

²² Russell A. Berman, “Cultural Studies and the Canon: Some Thoughts on Stefan George,” *Profession* (1999): 170, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25595682>.

²³ Berman, 172.

²⁴ Berman, 178.

²⁵ Maria Grever and Siep Stuurman, *Beyond the Canon: History for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 3.

In school textbooks, the presented history is regarded as fact, without acknowledging that it is from one historian's perspective. The authority of the canon prevents readers from seeing that the information could be questioned. For the canon to last it should add new knowledge and perspective but also keep the main historical storyline. Nowadays it should keep the balance between traditions and what is already new, it should be open to new ideas.²⁶

II/B. Memory research

We start to write about the history of a period, a society, or a person when it is in the past and to preserve and remember it. French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945) notes in *On Collective Memory*, "*the only means of preserving such remembrances is to write them down in a coherent narrative, for the writings remain even though the thought and the spoken word die.*"²⁷ I can say that those writings nowadays mostly are transformed from generation to generation by, first of all, textbooks, and we can consider them as a source of collective memory.

Collective memory differs from history because it is a continuous stream of thought, keeping alive only what is relevant to the group's present identity. History is divided into periods, they are more formal.²⁸ History textbooks can be seen both as sources of history and collective memory. As sources of history, they contain different periods, facts, and shape identity as the sources of collective memory.

Due to the collective memory history is transformed through generations. And it is not just an individual's work but a societal work. "*Society from time to time obligates people not just to reproduce in thought previous events of their lives, but also to touch them up, to shorten them, or to complete them so that, however convinced we are that our memories are exact, we give them a prestige that reality did not possess.*"²⁹ Psychologists have developed different theories about where memories are stored from, as people who belong to different societies, memories also at the same time can be interpreted in different way by different people.³⁰ Precisely, each person's or group's memory of the same event can be interpreted differently. However, in the case of textbooks, certain and fixed memories are presented, which can only be altered under the pressures of different periods.

²⁶Baruch Kimmerling, "Academic History Caught in the Cross-Fire: The Case of Israeli-Jewish Historiography," *History & Memory* 7, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 1995): 57, as cited in Elie Podeh, "History and Memory in the Israeli Educational System: The Portrayal of the Arab-Israeli Conflict in History Textbooks (1948-2000)," *History and Memory* 12, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2000): 66.

²⁷ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (eBook, Perlego, 1992), 78-79.

²⁸ Halbwachs, 80.

²⁹ Halbwachs, 51.

³⁰ Halbwachs, 52.

In 1996, French historian Pierre Nora introduced the concept of *lieux de mémoire*, or “places of memory”, which relates to symbolic sites or practices where collective memory is preserved. He argues that as spontaneous memory fades in modern society, there is a need to create and protect these places of memory intentionally. Memory is transformed through communities. However, there is a need to archive, celebrate, and authenticate memories because this process no longer occurs automatically. *Lieux de mémoire* represents efforts to consciously protect and celebrate memories, often because there is a fear that these memories will be lost in the face of an ever-advancing present.³¹ “*The need for memory is need for history.*”³² Here, I can say that textbooks also have the function preserving those “places of memory,” because through the information they contain people can see anything that existed many years ago.

According to Pierre Nora, *lieux de mémoire* has three senses: material, symbolic, and functional. The archive is considered a material site, which becomes symbolic when people see it as more than just stored documents, giving it a special meaning representing shared history or identity. An example of a functional site is a textbook, noting “*that it becomes lieux de mémoire when it becomes part of a ritual.*”³³ Precisely, the term ritual here refers to the lessons or historical narratives taught over generations that impact national identity and collective memory.

According to American educational theorist Michael Apple, though textbooks pretend to teach neutral, legitimate knowledge, they are often used as ideological tools to promote a certain belief system and legitimize an established political and social order. In other words, the selection and organization of knowledge for schools is an ideological process that serves the interests of particular classes and social groups.³⁴ As we know, ideological education is connected with collective memory, so textbooks in many countries can be considered means of collective memory.

II/C. Content analysis

Content analysis is an essential method for examining textbooks. I am using content analysis as it promotes a deeper understanding of the context of the texts and development of certain events through different periods. Specifically, I apply this method in my research to analyze how historical events, figures, and values are represented. I aim to identify what is

³¹ Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 7.

³² Nora, 8.

³³ Nora, 14.

³⁴ Michael W. Apple, *Official Knowledge: Democratic Education in a Conservative Age* (New York, 1993), as cited in Elie Podeh, “History and Memory in the Israeli Educational System: The Portrayal of the Arab-Israeli Conflict in History Textbooks (1948–2000),” *History and Memory* 12, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2000): 66.

emphasized or omitted and explore how they affect the construction of national identity. I will classify the main topics covered, tabulate the frequency of events or figures, and evaluate their portrayal in the texts. Content analysis is necessary because it allows quantitative (counting certain elements) and qualitative (exploration of concept and meaning) evaluation. In the case of the Armenian History textbooks content analysis suggests different interpretations and national identity formation via portraying the significant heroes.

Jaak Mikk, an Estonian education scientist and emeritus professor at the University of Tartu, in his book *Textbook: Research and Writing*, states that many topics should be included in textbooks, and some of them are, some are not. However, the problem is that researchers have analyzed one or two or some of the topics. So, what should we do for research Mikk suggests two options. One of them is to study the theory of the content area and write down possible topics.³⁵ Another option is to read a textbook, write down the topics that it contains, read another one, and refine step by step. This is more practice-oriented, which as I understand precisely means, starting from the first textbook till the last one, we should understand their differences, or what kind of information is in all of them.

Textbooks have the most influence on the students. As Mikk notes, “*due to the emotions, the brain of a student functions with a higher efficiency.*”³⁶ Emotional text motivates the students to read. But too much emotion is also not good. So, in Armenian history textbooks events can be analyzed in the context of emotions, to see how certain events are presented, and whether they include emotions to have an impact on the students, which is a part of national identity creation. Another important part of textbooks is illustration, which also draws out emotions. “*Pictures with a new and strange content are more affective than pictures with familiar content.*”³⁷ Images of national heroes, for instance, can affect how students think.

Textbooks influence the students’ value system for example a German scholar J.S. Hohman describes the situation of school textbooks in Nazi Germany. The topics were war, battles, bravery, and stories about war heroes. The textbook mostly spoke about success and victory rather than death and defeat.³⁸ This is how national identities are formed, and this process helps create a shared sense of identity, pride and ideology.

In *Textbooks in the Kaleidoscope: A Critical Survey of Literature and Research on Educational Texts* is mentioned that Norwegian historian Magne Angvik distinguishes two main methods of content analysis: quantitative and qualitative. Content analysis can include the

³⁵ Jaak Mikk, *Textbook: Research and Writing* (Frankfurt am Main, 2000), 17.

³⁶ Mikk, 255.

³⁷ Mikk, 273.

³⁸ Mikk, 311-312.

number of pages or passages on a subject or a qualitative evaluation of how a certain event is represented. The quantitative analysis of content is based on empirical research developed in the social sciences. For example, in a history textbook, one could count how often women or certain historical events are mentioned, then explore whether they are presented positively or negatively. It includes spatial analysis which measures size. For example, it counts how many pages are devoted to a certain issue. Frequency analysis counts the number of times certain phenomena are mentioned. The qualitative method is a way of studying things by focusing on the detailed understanding of the meaning, content, and context of the information rather than measuring or counting it.³⁹

Four aspects of the analysis of a message:

1. Attention – which topics and themes are covered,
2. Emphasis – what is important in the message,
3. Tendency – what is considered right, valuable, etc.,
4. Structure – which elements of the message are related by clustering, or casual or other relationships.⁴⁰

III. Chapter: Black Hours

III/1. Fall of the Artashesian Dynasty

During the Seleucid Empire Armenia was divided into four parts: Greater Armenia, Minor Armenia, Sophene, and Commagene. In 190 BC in the battle of Magnesia, Seleucid Empire was defeated by the Roman Empire after which in Greater Armenia Artashesian (190-160 BC) was proclaimed king. During his reign, the kingdom developed its economy, agriculture, craftsmanship, and trade. It was a time of prosperity. During 160-95 AD Artaxias's sons Artawazd then Tigran I (Tiran) ruled the kingdom, whose years of ruling were comparatively peaceful. The greatest king of Artashesian dynasty is Tigran the Great (95-55 BC). During his reign Armenian kingdom stretched from the Mediterranean Sea to the Caspian Sea, from the great Caucasian Mountain range to Mesopotamia and the Red Sea. But after his death descendants could not keep his expanded kingdom and gradually were defeated by Romans and Parthians. The last king of the Artashesian dynasty was Tigran IV whose death ended the dynasty in 12 AD.⁴¹

In the textbooks published in the Ottoman Empire, there are no sections devoted to the Artashesian dynasty. And the Artashesian kings are mixed with the Aršakuni dynasty's kings.

³⁹ Johnsen, 1993, 141-142

⁴⁰ Mikk, 17.

⁴¹ H. R. Simonyan, ed., *Հայոց Պատմություն [Armenian History]* (Yerevan: Yerevan State University, 2012), 45-60.

Everything is very chaotic, and it is difficult to follow the sequence. The first and one of the great kings of the Artashesian dynasty is Artashes the First. There is a part when the Alans attack Armenia and Artashes the First fights with his army greatly and captures Alan's prince. The king, to save his son, agrees to give her daughter Sat'enik to Artashes. All this is written under the part when King Artashes the Second is described, but actually, this refers to Artashes the First, "*A peace treaty was signed with the Alans, which was strengthened by the marriage of Artashes and the Alan princess Satenik.*"⁴²

In the textbooks published in 1888, the dates of kings' ruling periods are written, before it they are not always presented. There is a question "*How many periods is Armenian history divided into?*" The answer is, "*Five: Haykazeants, Arshakuneants, Bagratuneants, Rubineants, and the time when Armenia was under other's control.*"⁴³ We can see that there is no Artashesian dynasty presented separately. Only in the 1910 textbook, we have a separate section devoted to it.⁴⁴ In the textbooks from the period of Tsarist Russia is the same situation as in most textbooks from the Ottoman Empire.

In the 1951 textbook from the Soviet period, this topic is entitled, "The Temporary Eradication of Armenian Kingdom," which refers to the Artashesian dynasty. Approximately two pages are dedicated to this topic. The last rulers of the Kingdom are Tigran IV and his sister Erato. The 1965 textbook, this event is entitled "*The Fall of Artashesian dynasty.*"⁴⁵ The causes of the fall is that Rome was powerful at that time, and social-class problems.⁴⁶ Approximately a page is dedicated to this topic. The last ruler is Erato, nothing about his brother. In the 1989 textbook, we do not see any word about the last kings of Artashesian Kingdom. Here is written that the Romans named Armenia province. This word is written in Armenian պրովինցիա (provinc'ia) and in brackets its Armenian version նահանգ (nahang) which can be seen as an influence from Soviet times.⁴⁷

In the 2023 textbook the context is the same, but there is a sentence that says, "*The developed concept of active neutrality by Tigran the Great and Artawazd was destroyed.*"⁴⁸ After that, the author of the textbook explains the concept of active neutrality, which means to

⁴² Simonyan, 48.

⁴³ Minas Gabamachean, *Նոր Դասագիրք Հայոց Պատմության* [New Textbook of Armenian History], Constantinople: G. Baghtadlyan Press, 1888, 6.

⁴⁴ K.H. Basmachean, *Նոր Դասագիրք Հայոց Պատմության* [New Textbook of Armenian History] (Constantinople: P. Paleants Library, 1910), 27.

⁴⁵ V. A. Parsamyan, S.P. Poghosyan, Sh. R. Harutyunyan, *Հայ ժողովրդի պատմություն* [History of the Armenian People] Yerevan: "Louys" Publishing, 1965, 21.

⁴⁶ Parsamya, Poghosyan, Harutyunyan, 21.

⁴⁷ B. N. Araqelyan, Ts. P. Aghasyan, and V. A. Parsamyan, *Հայ ժողովրդի Պատմություն* [History of the Armenian People] (Yerevan, 1989)

⁴⁸ Smbat Hovhannisyan, *Հայոց Պատմություն* [Armenian History] for Public Schools, 7th grade (Yerevan, 2023), 93.

be neutral to one's powerful neighbors and to abstain from devotion or animosity towards them. And notes that it is in international relations' positionings.⁴⁹ Nowadays in Armenia the government always speaks about the peace agreement with their neighboring country, and maybe this is a way to also create in children's developing identities that being neutral is good.

The representation of the Artashesian dynasty has evolved in Armenian History textbooks, reflecting political, cultural, and ideological influences. In most textbooks from the Ottoman Empire, the Artaxiad kings were not distinguished, always mixed with the Aršakuni dynasty. But with the development of textbooks and maybe the usage of the right sources, only one textbook started to write the kingdoms and kings exactly one by one. This could affect the collective memory and canon of those times. During Soviet times, the narrative shifted, and the focus was on class struggle topics. The contemporary textbook is somehow focused on contemporary problems and tries to develop students' critical thinking by promoting neutrality. We see that the representation of this event differs in different periods based on canon which affects the collective memory and ideologically influences every period with its certain political changes.

III/1. Armenia without a king

The Aršakuni dynasty ruled the Kingdom of Armenia from 12 to 428 AD. During the Aršakuni king Khosrov the Great's reign the Persians attacked Armenia killed the king, and the land was left without a king for many years, 261-286 AD. *"The overthrow of the last Parthian king of Iran, Artawan V, by the Sasanian usurper Ardašir (Ardashir) I (ca. 114) radically broke the compromise status quo of Rhandaia between Rome and Iran and inaugurated centuries of intensified warfare between them. More critically for Armenia, it turned its Aršakuni (Arshakuni) rulers from kinsmen of the Iranian Parthian royal house into its avengers, so that the earliest Armenian fifth-century account of Armenian Christianization, attributed to Agat'angelos (Agathangelos), significantly presents the war between Ardasir and Xosrov of Armenia in terms of a blood feud."*⁵⁰

In 1861, 1863, and 1866 Armenian textbooks from the Ottoman Empire, this event is introduced in 40 lines. They all include the same words (structure). But only in 1866, there is some interaction between the writers and the readers, as questions are added. For example, in the 1866 textbook *"Who governed Armenia after Khosrov's death?"* or on the same page,

⁴⁹ Hovhannisyan, 2023,93.

⁵⁰ Hovhannisian, Volume I, 71.

*“What brave deeds did Trdat in Rome?”*⁵¹ The same questions in 1875, 1879, and 1887 textbooks are written differently, such as *“How did Trdat behave towards the Romans?”*⁵² In the first one we can see the heroism of Trdat, he is presented as a brave figure. The second version is more about his political relations with the Romans. Also in the 1866 textbook is written, *“How did Diocletian reward Trdat?”*⁵³ Which shows his strong relations with Diocletian. This part in the 1875, 1879, and 1887 is written, *“How did the Romans reward Trdat?”*⁵⁴ This shows Armenia’s political connection to Rome. In the 1875, 1879, and 1887 textbooks, this event is not written separately, and the number of lines is 26.

Three Armenian history textbooks from the Ottoman Empire from 1888 are the same but of different productions. In the first one, there are only 11 lines dedicated to this event. For example, in the previous textbooks Trdat’s brave deeds are presented in detail but in this one just is written, *“He gained great renown for his immense bravery.”*⁵⁵ In the second one this topic is titled *“Armenia without a king.”*⁵⁶ In the third, *“Armenia under Persian Governance.”*⁵⁷ King Khosrov’s death only in this textbook is described with the adjective disastrous, *“How was the situation in Armenia after Khosrov's Disastrous death.”*⁵⁸ Then goes, *“The Armenians bravely resisted for a long time, but finally, not being able to endure it, they reluctantly obeyed.”*⁵⁹ Here we see that the spirit of the Armenians, although they were defeated, they fought bravely, which refers to the representation of values and national identity creation. So that the reader could gain nationalistic ideas from history. In all the textbooks it is mentioned that when Artasir came and conquered Armenia, King Khosrov’s son and daughter, Trdat and Khosrovandukht, were in safety due to Artavazd Mandakuni and Ota Amatuni. But in 1912 the surname of Artavazt Mandakuni is Mamikonian, *“Artavazd Mamikonian took Trdat to Rome.”*⁶⁰

In the 1926 textbook, from Iran, this event is introduced under the name “Christian Armenia, Trdat and Gregory the Illuminator,” where the focus is mostly on the religion, as it

⁵¹ Stepan Perch Poghos Papazyan, *Դասագիրք Ազգային Պատմության* [Textbook of National History] (Constantinople: H. Muhentisian Press, 1866), 44.

⁵² Mkrtich H. Cholakian, *Դասագիրք Ազգային Պատմության Հայոց* [Textbook of National History of the Armenians], Constantinople: 1875,1879,1887, 33.

⁵³ Papazyan, 1866, 45.

⁵⁴ Cholakian, 1875, 1879, 1887,

⁵⁵ Minas Gabamachean, *Նոր Դասագիրք Հայոց Պատմության* [New Textbook of Armenian History], Constantinople: G. Baghtadlyan Press, 1888, 44.

⁵⁶ A.M. Garagashian, *Պատմություն Հայոց, Ի պէս Ազգային Դպրոցաց* [History of the Armenians, for National Schools], Constantinople: 1888, 39.

⁵⁷ Minas Gabamachean, *Պատմություն Հայ Ազգային* [History of Armenians], Margaritaen Printing, Constantinople: 1888, 59.

⁵⁸ Minas Gabamachean, *Պատմություն Հայ Ազգային* [History of the Armenian Nation], 1888, 59.

⁵⁹ Minas Gabamachean, *Պատմություն Հայ Ազգային* [History of the Armenian Nation], 1888, 59.

⁶⁰ Davit Khachkonts, *Պատկերազարդ Հայոց Պատմություն* [Illustrated History of the Armenians], Constantinople: 1912, 146.

starts with saying that Armenians adopted Christianity under the reign of the King Trdat III.⁶¹ If we compare the Ottoman period textbooks with the textbook from Tabriz we can see that in the latter more was spoken about culture and values, which can mean that at that time it was important to keep national values and identities in the migrating lives.

In the 1965 textbook from the Soviet period, this topic mostly speaks about the foundation of feudal relations and feudal Armenia's classes. Then presents that, "*Armenia fell under the influence of the Sasanians from the 50s of the III century to the end of the 90s. At that time, Crown Prince Trdat returned to Armenia, who had been taken to Rome since childhood.*"⁶² There is a shift in the narrative toward a socio-political structure. It mentioned how Armenia dealt with powerful neighbors, as the class struggle is mentioned, and how Armenia could survive under the pressures.

In the 2023 textbook from Yerevan, it is written that "after the death of Khosrov II, *loyal people helped his son to be safe and sent him to Rome, where he got a brilliant education, and studied Roman and Latin.*"⁶³ Showing important servings to the emperor he gains authority. Here we see very short but at the same time praising information about Trdat. If in the Ottoman period textbooks wrote that, Khosrov's whole family was killed and only his two children were saved, in the 2023 textbook there is no such a sentence. This could mean that there is a purpose not to introduce it from the victim's perspective. We can see that overall, collective memory is preserved in the same way, but as a part of the historical canon, this topic shifted gradually, focusing on the positive and good points of the event.

III/3. Division of Armenia

As stated by American historian Nina Garsoian (1923-2022), "*The first appearance in Armenia of the Parthian Arsacid (Armenian Aršakuni/Arshakuni) dynasty, which was eventually destined to hold the undisputed crown of the country, dates as early as a.d. 12 when a member of this family, the King of Kings Vonones, driven from Parthia for his pro-Roman tendencies, managed to cling to the Armenian throne.*"⁶⁴ Then the Parthian king Vologeses (Armenian Vagharshak) named his brother Tiridates or Trdat as the Armenian king. This was the beginning of the Arshakuni dynasty. In 378 in the battle of Adrianople Rome was defeated by the Gothic rebels. The empire weakened and lost the ability to pursue an active policy in the

⁶¹ R. Khan-Azat, Հայաստանի Համառոտ Պատմություն: Սկզբից մինչև մեր Օրերը [Short History of Armenia: From the Beginning to Our Times] (Tabriz: Paros Publishing House, 1926), 82.

⁶² V. A. Parsamyan, S.P. Poghosyan, Sh. R. Harutyunyan, Հայ ժողովրդի պատմություն [History of the Armenian People] Yerevan: "Louys" Publishing, 1965, 28.

⁶³ Hovhannisyan, 2023, 109.

⁶⁴ Hovhannisian, Volume I, 64.

Near East and counter the advances of Sassanian Persia by force. This affected Armenia, and as a result of the Roman-Persian negotiations in 387, Greater Armenia was divided between the two empires.⁶⁵

In the 1910 textbook from the Ottoman period, this topic is presented in one and a half pages. The reason for dividing Armenia is that when Persians heard about the murder of the Armenian king they decided at once to suggest Rome divide Armenia between them because as they said Armenia was the reason for their failures.⁶⁶ In the 1911 textbook, only 17 lines are dedicated to this topic. Also, the year of this event is wrong instead of 387 it is written 395.⁶⁷

In the 1916 textbook from the Tsarist period, we have 3 pages about this topic but before the situation that resulted in the division and also the situation afterward is presented. Again, we have a chronological mistake which says that in 384 Armenia sank.⁶⁸

In the Soviet Textbooks, for example, the 1951, the partition is presented by dimensions, such as 4/5 part was under Persia's control, and 1/5 was under Rome's control. For a while Armenian dynasty Aršakuni governed Armenia as a vassal.⁶⁹ In the textbooks from this period, there is much spoken about feudalism. The division of Armenia resulted in the fall of the Aršakuni dynasty, and in the 1951 also 1965, and 1973 textbooks it is mentioned that the fall of the dynasty was caused by the rooting of feudal relations, which means that ministers wanted to be independent in their regions. Persia and Rome destroyed Armenia's centralized state.⁷⁰

The 1989 and 1991 textbooks are the same. They tell that after the murder of the king in 387, Armenia was divided between Persia and Rome. Most of the territory was left to Persia. And after it the notable event of the V century is presented, the creation of Alphabet which should have helped the nation to defend their state from Persia. However, in 418 Persia destroyed the Aršakuni dynasty and Armenians lost their state.⁷¹ The 2023 textbook is approximately the same.

Textbooks from early years focus on the geopolitical effects and pressures from Persia and Rome. Textbooks from the Soviet period, on the other hand, focus on feudal divisions within the country as the main reason for the fall. Post-Soviet textbooks connect the division to cultural resilience, seeing the Armenian alphabet as a unifying force.

⁶⁵ Simonyan, 69.

⁶⁶ Basmachean, 1910, 55-56.

⁶⁷ Khachkonts, 1910, 182.

⁶⁸ Sahak Torosian, *Հայոց Պատմություն* [Textbook of Armenian History], (Tbilisi: 1916), 190.

⁶⁹ B.N. Araqelyan, A.R. Hovhannisyanyan, eds., *Հայ ժողովրդի Պատմություն* [History of the Armenians], Yerevan: Haypethrat, 1951), 101.

⁷⁰ Parsamyan, Poghosyan, Harutyunyan, 1965, 32.

⁷¹ Araqelyan, Aghasyan, Parsamyan, 1989, 39; B. N. Araqelyan, Ts. P. Aghasyan, and V. A. Parsamyan, *Հայ ժողովրդի Պատմություն* [History of the Armenian People] (Yerevan: Louys, 1992), 39.

III/4. Tamerlane's First Invasion

There were several Timurid invasions of Armenia starting from 1386 to 1409. We will focus on the first Timurid invasion that happened in 1386-1387, “*by the lame warlord Timur (Tamerlane) and constituted the last major invasions of the Armenian highlands from Central Asia.*”⁷² During this first invasion a region called Nakhichevan was taken, and other towns and fortresses were devastated. In 1387, after a month of fighting he captured the city of Van. Women and children were enslaved, and thousands of men were thrown from the city walls. After this cruelty farming was disrupted and in some areas there was cannibalism.⁷³

In the textbooks from the Ottoman Empire, this topic contains the same information with some additions or omissions. All tell that he had done many horrible actions in the city of Sebastia in Western Armenia: The city's troops were buried alive, he had the men and elders bound hand and foot and trampled them under horses in the fields, ordered the rest to be drowned. Only in the 1910 and 1926 (from Tabriz) textbooks is mentioned that the place where 4000 soldiers were buried alive is called Black Garden.⁷⁴ In another 1910 textbook this topic is not described in detail, but in eleven lines describes the condition of Armenians during that time. Armenian cities, villages, and churches were destroyed, and then mentions “*The main perpetrators of these barbarities Chormaghan, Tamerlane, and other bloodthirsty Tatars like them, whose names should always be remembered with curses.*”⁷⁵ Here we see the hatred shown in the textbook, which could influence the students' values and national identity creation.

Textbooks from the Soviet period mostly contain the same information. For example, the 1926, 1951, and 1888 textbooks have the same information about him taking books and artworks to the city of Samarkand. In the 1888 textbook, “*What is noteworthy to mention? Tamerlane, during his campaign, took numerous Armenian and other language manuscripts to Samarkand, placed them in a tower, and ordered that they should not be taken out; instead, anyone who wished could enter and read them inside.*”⁷⁶ In 1951 is written, “*With huge captured materials, including many manuscripts and works of art, and a large number of prisoners, Timur's army returns to Samarkand.*”⁷⁷ The 1973 textbook starts the topic by describing that during the Mongol invasions, many nomadic groups settled in Armenia, and were divided into two groups named Karakoyunlu and Akkoyunlu. In the 1989 textbook, we

⁷² Hovhannisian, Volume I, 267.

⁷³ Hovhannisian, Volume I, 267-268.

⁷⁴ Davit Khachkonts, *Պատմիկութեան Հայրը Պատմիկութեան* [Illustrated History of the Armenians], (Constantinople: 1912), 167.

⁷⁵ Basmachean, 1910, 114.

⁷⁶ Gabamachean, *New Textbook of Armenian History*, 103.

⁷⁷ Araqelyan, Hovhannisian, 1951, 252.

see the same but written with more hatred, *“The Mongol despotic and plundering state could not endure for long, [...] They (the turkmen) turned Armenia and its neighboring countries into an arena of wars, raids, and unrest.”*⁷⁸

The post-Soviet Textbook of 1992 year is the same as the 1989 one. The 2024 textbook has similarities with them, presents the topic very shortly representing Timurlane in this way, *“He surpassed even the Mongols in his cruelty.”*⁷⁹ Here we see the extremity of his villainy.

In conclusion, all the periods describe this event in the same way, sometimes having long descriptions, sometimes short. The only notable difference is the presentation of his name: Lenktimur, Lenk Temur, or Langtamur. This can be attributed to linguistic variations in how the name was recorded and transmitted.

III/5. Armenian Genocide

Armenian Highlands consist of two parts Eastern Armenia and Western Armenia. In the eleventh century, Seljuk Turks arrived and conquered many territories. Later Western Armenia was under the occupation of the Ottoman Empire. During World War I Western Armenians faced horrible atrocities. At the beginning of the 10th century, the Ottoman Empire had an economic and political crisis. There were revolutionary groups, such as the Young Turks, who tried to help the Empire survive opposing the Abdul Hamid regime. They tried to advance programs of Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism. In 1911 the three members of that revolutionary group, Taleat, Enver, and Jemal Pashas decided on a secret meeting to annihilate Armenians, to occupy Armenia completely, and to implement the pan-Turkish plan. And during the First World War, they decided to fulfill their plan. On 1915 April 14 in Constantinople and other cities of the Ottoman Empire many Armenians, including intellectuals, writers, cultural figures, doctors, and national and party figures were arrested. Men, women, children, and old people were being massacred. 1.5 million Armenians became victims of Genocide.⁸⁰

In the 1965 textbook from the Soviet period two pages speak about Armenian Genocide. It starts by saying that Enver, Taleat, and Jemal Pashas started the monstrous plan for the annihilation of Armenians.⁸¹ It is called mass displacement and massacre, annihilation. There were self-defense battles in Western Armenia during that time, but they are not presented in detail as in the 1985 textbook. There is a separate part entitled “Armenians’ heroic self-defense.” The most notable battle was Van’s (city in Western Armenia) self-defense battle. The

⁷⁸ Araqelyan, Aghasyan, Parsamyan, 1989, 91.

⁷⁹ Smbat Hovhannisyan, Ala Kharatyan, and Zaruhi Hakobyan, *Հայոց Պատմություն [History of Armenians]*, for Public Schools, 8th grade (Yerevan: 2024), 60.

⁸⁰ Simonyan, 42.

⁸¹ Parsamyan, Poghosyan, Harutyunyan, 1965, 216.

textbook tells how Armenians fought against the Ottomans for a month, but food was scarce, and the military strength went down. *“At that critical moment, on May 6, the Armenian volunteers and Russian forces entered Van, and the Armenian population of the city welcomed their liberators with great joy.”*⁸² This part in the 1965 textbook is *“In Van, for more than a month, Armenians heroically resisted the Turks until Russian forces arrived to assist.”*⁸³ In the earlier textbook, we have only Russian forces, but in the 1985 textbook, Armenian volunteers are added. In the 2013 textbook it is written, *“Upon receiving news of the advance of Russian forces and Armenian volunteers, the Turkish forces retreated. On May 5, the first Armenian volunteer groups entered the city of Van.”*⁸⁴ Here we see a combination of Russian forces and Armenian volunteers, but the last sentence emphasizes the efforts of Armenians. In the 1965 textbook, it is mentioned that 300 thousand Armenians could migrate to Russia. In the 1985 textbook Russia’s help was mentioned, saying that with the help of Russian troops Armenians could migrate to Transcaucasia, Northern Caucasia, and other parts of Russia. The 1985 textbook uses the words massacre, Genocide, and Mets Mec Ełērn (Great Massacre in Armenian). About 5.5 pages are dedicated to the Armenian Genocide. In both Soviet textbooks, Imperial Germany is presented as the accomplice of the Turks. There is no sentence about it in the 2013 post-soviet textbook. Twelve pages are dedicated to this topic in the 2013 textbook starting with the explanation of the term Genocide, when it appeared by who, with a map and illustrations on every page.

Textbooks from the Soviet period did not have a lot of information about it even the term Genocide was not used, but in later textbooks, we have more detailed information. We see how the political regime changes influence the presentation of history. In the Soviet textbooks Germany is represented as a rival country, but after the collapse Armenia as an independent country focuses only on the main perpetrators and victims.

IV: Chapter: Golden Age

IV/1. Artashesian King Tigran the Great

As already mentioned, Tigran II was the most powerful king in the Artashesian dynasty and we can say the only one because during his reign the borders of Armenia were expanded. He signed a peace treaty with Mithridates Eupator, the king of Pontus. Together they won many wars and conquered many territories. Parthian king Gotarz gave the title of “King of Kings.”

⁸² Ts.P. Aghayan, Sh. R. Harutyunyan, and A.N. Mnatsakanyan, *Հայ ժողովրդի Պատմություն (1900-1983) [History of Armenians]*, (Yerevan: Louys Publishing House, 1985), 36-37.

⁸³ Parsamyan, Poghosyan, Harutyunyan, 1965, 217.

⁸⁴ Ashot Melkonyan, Aram Simonyan, Aram Nazaryan, and Hakob Muradyan, *Հայոց Պատմություն [History of Armenians]*, for Public Schools, 8th grade (Yerevan: Zangak, 2013), 129.

His forty-year reign is described as the time of military-political, cultural, and economic rise, and the international role of Armenian statehood was increased.⁸⁵

In the textbooks published in the Ottoman Empire Armenian Royal dynasties are presented very chaotic. The rulers of certain dynasties are mixed. For example, Tigran II is one of the greatest Kings of the Artashesian Dynasty, but in the textbooks of this period he and other Artashesian kings are presented under the Aršakuni dynasty, also sometimes some rulers are presented in two persons. In the 1861 textbook, two pages are dedicated to Tigran II.

If we compare the sequence of the Artashesian rulers in the 2013 textbook for the 6th grade it goes Artashes I, Artavazd, Tigran I, Tigran II (Tigran the Great). But in the Ottoman period textbooks, we see one Tigran who did great things and succeeded in many wars. Later we see also another Tigran who is Tigran III, presented as Artavazd's brother. This one is more right, but these textbooks do not cover the actual and precise story of the Artashesian dynasty. Only 16 lines talk about Tigran III, represented with the adjective "courageous."⁸⁶

In the 1910 textbook, he is named Tigran II the Great, and it is mentioned that he raised the name of Armenia before the foreigners.⁸⁷ It is also mentioned that he is Artashes's son but that is a mistake he is his grandchild. In another textbook of 1910 finally, it is mentioned that Tigran the Great is presented as Aršakuni king by our historians, but during the reign of Tigran, the Aršakuni dynasty did not even exist.⁸⁸ Approximately four pages are dedicated to Tigran the Great in this textbook with illustrations of his picture and coins.⁸⁹

The textbook from the Tsarist period published in 1916 has fully 25 pages about Tigran the Great. Everything is included in that part, his great deeds, the wars that he succeeded, how he could expand the border of Armenia.

In the textbooks from the Soviet period, we see the influence of the Russian language. For example, in the 1973 textbook, it is written that the territory of the country expanded and got bigger.⁹⁰ The word territory is written in Armenian letters տնրիսնրիս (the same as teritoria). In the 1965 textbook, social and economic life is presented. The social classes during the Artashesian dynasty are represented, "It was a class society."⁹¹

⁸⁵ Simonyan, 48-50.

⁸⁶ Papazyan, 1862, 35.

⁸⁷ Davit Khachkonts, *Պատկերազարդ և քարտեզային Հայոց պատմություն* [Illustrated and Map-based History of the Armenians], (Constantinople: Syunec Library), 1910, 28.

⁸⁸ Basmachean, 1910, 32.

⁸⁹ Basmachean, 1910, 31-36.

⁹⁰ S. P. Poghosyan, *Հայ ժողովրդի պատմություն* [History of the Armenian People] (Yerevan: Louys, 1973), 24.

⁹¹ Parsamyan, Poghosyan, Harutyunyan, 1965, 16.

The 1926 textbook from Tabriz starts the part about Tigran the Great with this sentence, *“The most brilliant period of the Armenian History is the reign of Tigran the Great.”*⁹² Fully 14 pages are dedicated to Tigran the Great, which cover the situation in Armenia before him, during his reign, and his cooperations with Persian king Mithridates Eupator, the king of Pontus. As the textbook was used in Iran, we can see how they praise Mithridates, *“Mithridates Eupator, a very clever, proud and war lover person.”*⁹³ We can see almost the same description of Tigran the Great, *“Tigran the Great was a clever, but very proud, ambitious, and war lover.”*⁹⁴

The post-soviet textbook from 1992 does not speak about Tigran the Great much but 2023 has 11 pages dedicated to this figure including exercises. However, the 2023 textbook is very difficult and on one page there is a text, questions, some additional information, or quotations from different historians, which are a little bit difficult for a student to understand. This is done for critical thinking but when looking at the pages filled with everything one could get confused. However, in terms of collective memory Tigran the Great was and is remembered as a powerful king.

IV/1. The Adoption of Christianity

The religion of Aršakuni Armenia combined elements of Greek and Iranian beliefs, continuing a mix of traditions from earlier periods. Armenians worshiped different gods. The son of a Parthian noble, Gregory, who survived the massacre of his family and was raised as a Christian in Caesarea, returned to Armenia as an adult and served King Trdat. However, he was imprisoned and tortured for refusing to worship pagan gods. King Trdat committed sins, which is why was punished and got ill. His sister had a vision about his healing, and Gregory was miraculously freed, healed the king, and converted him to Christianity.⁹⁵

The Ottoman period textbooks of 1862, 1863, and 1866 years contain no dates about this event, they just tell the history one by one. The part that Trdat’s sister had a dream about the healing of his brother by Gregory the Illuminator is omitted. In the 1875, 1879, and 1887 textbooks, the context is the same, but they have the part about Khosrovidukht. We have three textbooks from 1910 and one of them is written that *“Gregory preached Christianity and baptized thousands of people that is why he was named the Second Illuminator of Armenia.”*⁹⁶ In the other textbooks, it is just Illuminator, not the second.

⁹² R. Khan-Azat, 1926, 32.

⁹³ R. Khan-Azat, 1926, 34.

⁹⁴ R. Khan-Azat, 1926, 35.

⁹⁵ Hovhannisian, Volume I, 81.

⁹⁶ Khachkonts, *Illustrated and Map-based History of the Armenians*, 1910, 53.

In the 1912 textbook is written that escaping the persecutions of Emperor Diocletian, 40 virgins came to Armenia under the leadership of Gayane. Trdat wanted to marry one of the virgins Hripsime, but being rejected he killed all the virgins. After which felt guilty and got crazy and he would wander the mountains and valleys like a pig.⁹⁷ But in the previous ones, for example, in the 1866 textbook, it is written that King Trdat took the appearance of a pig.⁹⁸

The 1906 textbook from the Tsarist period is like the Ottoman period 1912 textbook. In both textbooks, it is mentioned that Armenians are the first and the oldest Christian nation in the world. The 1916 textbook differs from the others, it contains much more information. It is mentioned that historically there is no proof of why Trdat released Gregory from the prison, and that there is a legend about it, and tells the story of Khosrovidukht's dream.

The 1916 textbook from Tabriz writes again the story of Trdat's killing the virgins and then getting ill after which says that this is a legend. Besides the legend, this textbook tells that Trdat remained loyal to the Roman Emperor's policy and during the reign of Diocletian, he persecuted Christians. But when Kostadin became the emperor, he accepted Christianity and so did Trdat III.⁹⁹

The 1951 textbook from the Soviet period speaks more about feudal culture. *"The Armenian feudalizing nobility sought to use the new religion for their class interests. After all, the Gospel says: Servants, obey your masters; do not speak badly of the rulers of your people."*¹⁰⁰ We see that the purpose is to teach children how society is constructed and that the working class should obey the government. A page is dedicated to this topic where only in one sentence we see the names of Trdat the Third and Gregory Illuminator. The 1965 textbook covers the same context but is shorter and does not mention any names. The 1973 textbook speaks about Trdat And Gregory, *"During Trad III's reign The supporters of Christianity, both among the general population and within the feudal class, had grown so much and influential that even the king leaned toward Christianity, and at the beginning of the 4th century, it was declared the state religion in Armenia."*¹⁰¹ Christianity is represented as a misleading religion as any other religion. The 1989 textbook and the post-soviet 1992 textbook are the same. Very shortly is said that under Trdat III's reign, Christianity was adopted, and the Armenian church was founded whose leader was Gregory the Illuminator. The 1989 textbook mentions that the Armenian Church became a defender and supporter of feudal land ownership.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Khachkonts, 1912, 161.

⁹⁸ Papazyan, 1866, 47.

⁹⁹ R. Khan-Azat, 1926, 89.

¹⁰⁰ Araqelyan, Hovhannisyan, 1951, 79.

¹⁰¹ Poghosyan, 1973, 47.

¹⁰² Araqelyan, Aghasyan, Parsamyan, 1989, 33.

The 2014 and 2023 textbooks differ a lot from each other. 2014 has more information. The first one has the title “The Adoption of Christianity as State Religion,” and the other one is “The Adoption of Christianity.” In the 2023 textbook, there is nothing about his illness and his sister’s dream, but on one of the pages, we see a QR code that opens a video speaking about all of that. This topic in the 2023 textbook ends this way, *“The church became one of the largest landowners in the country, second only to the royal domains in size.”*¹⁰³ But in the 2014 textbook, *“For centuries, the church has educated the people in the spirit of patriotism and national consciousness.”* Here we have a more patriotic way of ending the story.

The Ottoman and Tsarist period textbooks focus on the story of the dream of the King’s sister, and the 1926 textbook from Tabriz also introduces the political situation, that the King was just loyal to the Roman Emperor which is why Christianity was adopted. We see the change of canon especially in the Soviet period textbooks which mostly focus on the feudal system even the adoption of Christianity is considered the main factor in preserving that system. Post-Soviet textbooks shift to a more patriotic and nationalistic way, focusing on the church’s role in shaping Armenian identity. These illustrate how historical memory and values were adapted to meet the political and cultural needs of each period.

IV/3. Creation of Alphabet

Armenians knew both pagan and early Christian literature. However, they could not translate that knowledge into their language until the Armenian script was created. That important step forward was made possible by Mashtots, who was also called Mesrop by writers who lived after him. It happened around the year 400 AD. Most of the information about the invention of the alphabet we know from the biography of Mashtots written by his pupil Koriun. Mashtots is considered as the driving force and patriarch Sahak and King Vramshapuh supported him. *“It was in the course of his missionary activity that Mashtots realized the potential value of having the appropriate religious texts written in the Armenian language. Although the educated clergy used Greek or Syriac for the liturgy and could read biblical and theological books in those languages, that was of little help to the mass of the Armenian people.”*¹⁰⁴

The textbooks from the Ottoman Empire have overall the same content. The 1910 textbook has a separate passage entitled “The Invention of Armenian Alphabet,” but there is a lack of pages. Another 1910 textbook presents the story with illustrations of King Vramshapuh,

¹⁰³ Hovhannisyan, 2023, 112.

¹⁰⁴ Hovhannisian, Volume II, 200-201.

Mesrop Mashtots, and Patriarch Sahak. The 1912 textbook writes a more detailed history of Mesrop Mashtots, his life, how he created the alphabet, and how they developed it. Only in this book, does the topic end with these words, *“The significance of St. Sahak and St. Mesrop is immense because, thanks to their efforts in creating the Armenian alphabet, our literature flourished and prospered, and Armenian Christianity became forever an integral part of our national identity.”*¹⁰⁵

The 1926 textbook from Tabriz is the most understandable writing regarding this topic. The topic consists of two parts, one entitled “St. Sahak and St. Mesrop: The Invention of Letters” and the second part “Golden Age (century).” The first part tells how Mesrop feeling the need for the translation of the Bible into Armenian for preserving Christianity, asks St. Sahak and King Vramshapuh for help. The second part speaks about the aftermath of it, how they taught students the letters, and translated books.¹⁰⁶

The 1973 textbook introduces the culture of Armenia in the V-VIII. It has a picture of Mesrop Mashtots and points out the fact that Armenia was in danger of losing the state and one of the means to protect the land was the creation of national culture and national literature. If in the previous textbooks was written that the king suggested having a national literature in this textbook is the contrary, Mesrop Mashtots with his preachers raised a question before the king and the Catholicos about the creation of the Armenian letters and literature.¹⁰⁷ In the 1989 textbook, we have 11 lines about this event, the picture of Mesrop Mashtots, and also one picture on a whole page named The Armenian Alphabet by G. Khanjyan. Mashtots is described as *“A genius child of Armenian nation who created the Alphabet.”*¹⁰⁸ Again the political situation is described as saying that it will help people connect and preserve the culture. But besides this part, there is a separate section about Armenian culture of the IV-IX centuries which again starts with the creation of the alphabet, which could help the defense against Persia and the Byzantine Empire, as well as the preservation of Armenian culture and identity.¹⁰⁹

In the 1992 textbook is the same as the 1989, *“The greatest achievement of Armenian culture, which had the greatest historical and immeasurable significance, was the invention of Armenian writing.”*¹¹⁰ The 2023 textbook covers the same information overall. The year of the invention of the Armenian Alphabet is 405, as in the textbooks before it differs. The first book translated into Armenian from Greek and Assyrian is the Bible, called the Queen of

¹⁰⁵ Khachkonts, 1912, 191.

¹⁰⁶ R. Khan-Azat, 1926, 103-107.

¹⁰⁷ Poghosyan, 1973, 74.

¹⁰⁸ Araqelyan, Aghasyan, Parsamyan, 1989, 38-39.

¹⁰⁹ Araqelyan, Aghasyan, Parsamyan, 1989, 53.

¹¹⁰ Araqelyan, Aghasyan, Parsamyan, 1992, 53.

Translations, and the first sentence is the proverb of Solomon, *“To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding.”*¹¹¹

As we can see in every period the creation of the Armenian alphabet is tied to the construction of Armenian identity. The Ottoman and Diasporan period textbooks emphasize the religious and cultural importance of the script. The Soviet period textbooks represent it as a way of uniting people to resist foreign dominance. The post-Soviet textbooks again returned to focusing on the preservation of cultural and religious heritage.

IV/4. The Treaty of Nvarsak

The Treaty of Nvarsak is about the period when Armenians with difficulties could gain their autonomy and preserve their faith. During 470-484 when Armenia was under foreign control, Persian rule, Armenian nobility often conflicted or rebelled against them. In 484 with the leadership of military leader Vahan Mamikonian Armenians destroyed Persian forces and the new governor was elected, Sahak Bagratuni. Afterward, a few more battles took place, which were in favor of the Armenians. In 484 Persians lost the war with the Hephthalites and King Peroz was dead. The new king Vagharsh sent a delegation with a peace proposal to Vahan Mamikonian, and *“According to the Armenian-Persian peace treaty signed in the village of Nvarsak, the Sassanian monarchy re-established the autonomy of the marzpanate Armenia and the traditional rights of the nobility.”*¹¹²

The textbooks from the Ottoman period, starting from 1862 to 1910, have this event, but only in one textbook the name of the place Nvarsak is mentioned, saying that the Persian King signed a treaty with Vahan in Nvarsak.¹¹³ The 1906 textbook from the Tsarist period also speaks about the treaty that was signed between Persia and the Armenian governor without mentioning the place name.

The textbooks from the Soviet period are more understandable and present the event with highlighted titles. If in the 1973 textbook is written that the Persian King, coming after Peroz, abandoned the predecessor’s policy toward Armenia,¹¹⁴ the 1989 textbook says that the Persian troops were being defeated the King had to send a delegation with a peace proposal. In the 1965 and 1973 textbooks, the pride and the courage of the Armenians are more notable, *“The Armenian delegation entered Nvarsak to the sound of trumpets, marching triumphantly. When a Persian guard reminded Vahan Mamikonian that it was against custom for foreigners*

¹¹¹ Hovhannisyan, 2023, 149.

¹¹² Simonyan, 83.

¹¹³ Khachkonts, *Illustrated and Map-based History of the Armenians*, 1910, 78.

¹¹⁴ Poghosyan, 1973, 63.

to enter the Persian camp with trumpets playing, he responded that the Armenian delegation had come not as servants of the Persian king, but as free people. The Persians were thus compelled to silently endure this breach of protocol."¹¹⁵ This we do not have in the textbooks before and the 1989 and 1992 textbooks from the post-Soviet period mention just "*Arrived in Nvarsak with a big entourage.*"¹¹⁶

In the 2023 textbook is written, that after King Peroz, King Vahram tried to win over the Armenian nobles with concessions, and in the village of Nvarsak, in 484, the Nvarsak peace treaty was signed. Armenians presented their terms and in the 1926 textbook from Tabriz, we have this sentence, "*The Persians gladly accepted these terms.*"¹¹⁷ The use of the word gladly reflects a perspective shaped by the political or cultural context of that time, which could present the Persian Empire as wise and fair.

IV/5. The Historical Figure Davit Bek

In the early 18th century, as the Safavid Empire weakened, Armenians saw Russia as a key ally against the Ottoman threat. By 1716 Peter the Great had recognized the Armenian church in Russia and offered protection to Armenians. In 1723 the Turks attacked Transcaucasia and Georgians called for Russia's help, but Russia avoided conflict with the Ottomans. Davit, who served in Georgia during King Vakhtang VI's reign, in 1722 with several warriors was sent to Zangezur, at the request of the Armenians who were attacked by the Ottoman army. It is mentioned that he "*spent much of his efforts in keeping them [meliks (Armenian nobles)] united and loyal.*"¹¹⁸

In the 1862, 1863, and 1866 Armenian textbooks from the Ottoman Empire, the historical figure Davit Bek is presented as "Davit of Syunik, the brave prince." In this case, we can see that it mentions his connection to Syunik, we can call it a regional connection as Davit Bek is tied to Syunik before mentioning his brave actions. In 1875 and 1879 he is mentioned as "Davit, the brave prince of Syunik." The focus here is primarily on the heroic individual, presenting him as the central hero before highlighting his connection to Syunik.

In the 1888 textbook, this part dedicated to Davit Bek is entitled "Davit of Syunik, the brave prince, and his deeds." In the 1926 textbook from Iran, the topic is titled, "Davit Bek," where a special section is devoted to him. Comparing this to the 1862 textbook, the title appears as follows: "Shah Abbas's Invasion of Armenia: The Brave Deeds of Armenian Prince Davit of

¹¹⁵ Poghosyan, 1973, 62.

¹¹⁶ Araqelyan, Aghasyan, Parsamyan, 1992, 44.

¹¹⁷ R. Khan-Azat, 1926, 119.

¹¹⁸ Hovhannisian, Volume II, 88.

Syunik.” The 1862 textbook, begins by stating, “The Brave Prince Davit of Syunik, with several hundred very good Armenian soldiers, drove the raiders out of his province in 1720.” Meanwhile, in the 1926 textbook, it is written, “The meliks of Karabakh appeal to their compatriot, Davit Bek, who had gained a great name in Georgia as a brave and experienced military commander and invite him to lead the Armenian movement.” When he bravely fought against the Ottomans with only 450 Armenian soldiers, the Persian ruler “rewarded” him with “The title of Prince of Princes and the right to mint coins in his name.”

In the 1951 textbook from the Soviet period, the title is, “Davit Bek’s Victory.” First, he is mentioned in this sentence, “*The objective of that Turkish army was to encircle Syunik in coordination with the forces stationed in Karabakh, where Davit Bek was active.*”¹¹⁹ But in this textbook also is mentioned that Davit Bek asked for help from the Iranian prince Tahmaz. The Turks were in Meghri and he started the talks with Tahmaz and he sent a small army to the Araks river's bank. Shah Tahmaz ordered the neighboring Khans to go under the command of Davit Bek. “*The land of Kapan, which you have conquered bravely, let it be yours,*” wrote Tahmaz to Davit Bek and even gave him the right to mint coins.”¹²⁰ As we can see he is introduced as a brave military leader who not only defended Syunik but also made connections with the Iranian prince.

Here the Armenian-Russian relationship is presented as an important alliance for the Armenians. This also can be as the reflection of Soviet times, when the focus was on unity and cooperation. “*The brilliant heroic page of the enslaved Armenians for centuries was the result of liberation awakening, close relations of Armenians and Russians, which laid the foundation for Armenia's future freedom with the help of Russia.*”¹²¹ But in 1926 referring to this is written that Armenians asked for help from the Russian Tsar, “*Peter the Great, busy with those affairs, was not only unable to help the Armenians, but also withdrew his army from the Caspian Sea countries he conquered.*”¹²² This contrast shows a disappointed view in the 1916 textbook from Tabriz and a positive view towards Russia in the 1951 textbook which was influenced by the political changes of those times.

In 1965 textbooks this topic is entitled “David Bek in Kapan and the fight against the Ottoman invaders.” Then goes on, “*The Persian Shah recognized David-Bek’s authority over Syunik, gave him the right to mint coins and appointed him the general commander of the*

¹¹⁹ Araqelyan, Hovhannisyan, 1951, 305.

¹²⁰ Araqelyan, Hovhannisyan, 1951, 306.

¹²¹ Araqelyan, Hovhannisyan, 1951, 307.

¹²² R. Khan-Azat, 1926, 187.

Persian and Armenian troops of Transcaucasia.”¹²³ Here we see that not only over Armenians he gained authority, but also Persian troops were under his control.

Only in the 1973 textbook is mentioned his origins, “Davit-Bek's parents lived in Syunik and then went to Georgia. There, their son Davit joined the service in the Georgian army and reached the rank of officer.”¹²⁴ Here this event is entitled “David-Bek’s fighting against the Turkish invaders.”

In the 1989 textbook, this topic is entitled “Liberation battles in Syunik. Davit Bek.” The spirit of Armenian soldiers is highlighted, “*By the way, many Armenians served in the Georgian army, who were praised and considered brave and courageous people everywhere.*” Only in this textbook, Davit Bek is described by new adjectives, such as “Very patriotic and brave Davit Bek.” In the last part when Armenians are defeated by the Ottomans, it is mentioned that “*For that fighting's success Russia's help was needed,*”¹²⁵ In the 1992 textbook, mostly the context is the same, but this last sentence is omitted.

In the 2013 textbook, this topic is entitled, “*The Beginning of the Liberation Fighting in Syunik: Davit Bek,*” with the illustration of Davit Bek’s statue in Kapan. In the 2024 textbook Davit Bek is presented in this way, “*At the request of the Armenian landlords, the Armenian general Davit Bek, who came to Syunik from Georgia, was able to unite the forces of the local Meliks and rebelled against Persian rule.*”¹²⁶ But there is no illustration in this textbook, which is from my perspective a negative point. Because the illustrations help to better understand and remember the event or the figure.

Textbooks from the Ottoman Empire define Davit Bek’s role within historical and regional contexts, but the Iranian textbook highlights his role in the national movement, it contextualizes his leadership qualities. In the textbook from Iran his role in bringing together regional leaders, his diplomatic and military actions, and his part in a larger national and strategic resistance movement against Ottoman expansion are all emphasized. In the Soviet period, Davit Bek’s role is shown not only in the military context but also in the political context of Soviet Armenian unity and Russian help against Ottoman oppression. The Armenian-Russian alliance is portrayed positively. Overall, Davit Bek is consistently portrayed as a positive and brave figure in the historical canon, well-preserved in collective memory as an ideological and nationalistic symbol. Despite changes within the canon, he remains a central figure in Armenian identity construction, embodying the values of society.

¹²³ Parsamyan, Poghosyan, Harutyunyan, 1965, 109.

¹²⁴ Poghosyan, 1973, 141.

¹²⁵ Araqelyan, Aghasyan, Parsamyan, 1989,

¹²⁶ Hovhannisyan, Kharatyan, Hakobyan, 2024, 73.

Conclusion

The study of Armenian history textbooks through the Ottoman, Tsarist, Soviet, Diasporan, and Post-Soviet period shows the interplay between historical narratives, collective memory, and ideological factors. This thesis shows that history textbooks are not just educational tools but also part of the canon that changes in terms of political, cultural, and ideological shifts. The analysis shows how these narratives are presented and changed across periods by focusing on historical events and figures.

Textbooks construct collective memories because they canonize certain historical narratives depending on contemporary ideological, cultural, and political purposes. In some periods we see the obvious effect of political influence, in some do not. For example, in the textbooks from the Ottoman and Tsarist periods, we see narratives of regional and cultural resilience. They wanted to protect their culture despite the difficulties. Indeed, there are many mistakes or mixed stories in those textbooks. The textbook from the diaspora period mostly shows the need for and importance of preserving national identity and cultural heritage by presenting the events much longer and correct. The most obvious shifts we see in the textbooks from the Soviet period. The events mostly are connected to feudalism and class struggle. Post-Soviet textbooks shifted towards a more nationalistic perspective. The History of Armenia is presented with symbols of patriotism, resistance, and the brave spirit of the Armenian People.

This research covers qualitative and quantitative content analysis. Explores additions and omissions of the textbooks, how they present the events, and how they function as lieux de mémoire, as they preserve and transmit history that is important for national identity construction. For example, the descriptions of Tamerlane's invasions of the Armenian Genocide show the violence and sufferings, which are collective traumas, while the creation of the Armenian alphabet, or historical figure Davit Bek is the foundation of national unity and identity creation.

Through comparative analysis, the thesis underlines the political, cultural, and ideological battles and compromises existing in the educational system. We see the development of textbooks from the Tsarist period to the contemporary textbooks. The chaotic presentation of history in the Ottoman period textbooks shows the possibility of not having enough literature or challenges of preserving the exact national history under foreign rule. Indeed, developing textbooks could reach accuracy. History textbooks and their research are essential, as due to textbooks national identity is shaped, and cultural heritage is preserved.

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