

The New Palestinian History Textbooks for grades 6 to 8

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Didactic features and structure

Throughout the three books the didactic measures are similar. Each book consists of four to five chapters subdivided into five to eight sections. Each of the chapters introduces the topic with a short quotation, mostly by an Arab writer. A few citations by foreign writers or researchers support the positive image of Arab-Islamic development. Questions follow to test comprehension of the quotation. The main part of each chapter (2–4 pages) consists of information about various features, for example, Arabic language is defined by grammar and literature (poems and writings). The didactic method is listing the information and learning it by heart.

At the end of each chapter there is a ‘Self-Test’ (*Akhtabir Nafsi*) in which pupils have to repeat the most important information in the chapter or learn key words by heart. It also contains exercises that involve filling in blanks in sentences, answering questions with ‘Yes or No’ or ‘True or False’. On some occasions, the pupil is challenged to give his or her own opinion.

Two to three extended tasks end each chapter. These assignments are rather interesting and stimulating as the pupil is supposed to inform him or herself independently about a subject in the chapter. Advice is given on where the information can be found, for example, in the library or during a trip with the teacher to a historical site. A few of these tasks establish a connection between the topic and the history of the general situation in Palestine. For example, in relation to agriculture in Arab-Islamic countries, the task is to ‘find out the quantity of olive oil that is produced annually in Palestine’ (Arab-Islamic Civilization: 55). Olive oil is traditionally an important product for Palestinian international trade. But it also has a symbolic meaning (peace) and an emotional meaning in Palestine. Almost every Palestinian family grows olive trees and extracts olive oil. Another example is the task at the end of the topic of Roman culture in the Middle East, which is to ‘make a trip with the teacher to a church in Bethlehem or Sebastia to see the remains of Roman culture’ (History: The

Middle Ages: 21). Mentioning the ‘results of the European invasion of the Middle East’, there is one task that asks pupils to compare the European invasion to the Arab invasion of Andalusia. By doing this, the pupil is required to take several perspectives into consideration.

Ta’rikh al-Arab wa ‘l-Muslimin (The History of the Arabs and Muslims), grade 6 (elementary school), Ramallah 2000, 147 pages

Contents

The textbook contains five chapters, each divided into four to seven sections. It gives a broad overview of the life of the Arabs before the rise of Islam, the main features of Islam and the life of the Prophet Muhammad. The main part consists of three chapters about the caliphates of the orthodox caliphs (*al-Khulafa’ ar-Rashidun*), the Umayyads and the Abbasids.

In the first chapter, the geographical features of the Arab region and its politics and economy are described. The society consisted of Bedouins and settled groups with different levels of development. Nevertheless, they were not underdeveloped scientifically and economically; it is stressed that Yemen already had international trade relations. In regard to religion the Arabs were pagans. Because of this the society was divided into sects.

The chapter about the rise of Islam describes the life of the Prophet Muhammad after the Revelation, the *Hijra* and the constitution of an Islamic state in Medina, Saudi Arabia. It covers Muhammad’s drive to spread Islam to neighbouring countries through military/religious campaigns, and Islamic governance in the conquered countries.

In the last three chapters, the most important successors to the Prophet, the orthodox caliphs (*Al-Khulafa’ ar-Rashidun*), the Umayyads and the Abbasids are discussed. Each of these chapters tells about the foundation of the caliphates. An important part consists of the campaigns and wars to fight apostasy from Islam (*Ridda*) or to conquer new countries to spread Islam (*Futuhat*). It is described how rapid development in the conquered countries was achieved. The focus is on the Islamic government’s administration, economy, building and architectural projects, and finally the army and the navy. The Abbasids replaced the Umayyad. In this context, the background of the weakening and fall of the caliphates of the Umayyads and the Abbasids is described.

Didactic structure

At the beginning of each chapter the 'aims of the unit' are stated. They are separated into three levels/degrees of difficulty. The 'common level' includes comprehending certain expressions and their meaning/definition, for example, knowing Arab countries in the south and north. The 'advanced level' includes a deeper knowledge of geographical and religious matters, for example naming trade relations between Arab countries. Finally, the 'highest level' involves the ability to explain certain historical contexts, such as describing Islamic innovations and their consequences.

The chapters are subdivided into sections that begin with historical texts or citations from the caliphs describing the main features during the specific historical period. Those features are explained in a text that follows the citation. As an example for the progress of the Islamic administration in the conquered countries, several *Dawawin* (pl. of *Diwan* = council) are described. They managed all areas of life of the population and the state administration.

Historical Events

Concerning the life of the Prophet Muhammad, events meaningful for Islam are mentioned, for example, the revelation (*Nuzul al-Wahiy*), the 'Night Journey to the Seven Heavens' made by Muhammad (*Mi'raj*) and the *Hijra* (Muhammad's emigration from Mecca to Medina). The focus is on the campaigns (*Ghazwat*) of the Prophet and the caliphs to conquer new territories to spread Islam. In a table, an overview of the seven most important campaigns (The History of the Arabs and Muslims: 40) is given. It includes the name, the date and the reason for the campaign amongst all others.

Self-Image

The population of Arab countries is mainly defined by religion (and not by family name, language or nationality as an additional/alternative feature). Before the rise and spread of Islam the Arabs consisted of tribes; the members were pagans. Because of this there was no unity among them.

Nevertheless, they did have a rather proud self-image. The high level of development of Arab countries is stressed. For example, Yemen already carried out international trade and was

technically well developed (ibid.: 109). The Arab countries were economically independent and were constantly improving their economy and culture. This development was continued and extended during the governance of the caliphs.

The campaigns of the Prophet and the caliphs to acquire new territories to spread Islam are described as being fairly peaceful: ‘the religion of Islam was spread in the neighbouring countries without pressure, leading to improvements of the (situation of the) population’ (ibid.: 59). Also, the military campaigns are justified, since the borders with the neighbouring countries had to be protected. Armaments became necessary because of the expansionist and hostile tendencies of neighbouring countries (ibid.: 80).

Minorities are mentioned in passing. Jews were living in Arab countries before and since the spread of Islam. Their religion and property were respected because from the Islamic point of view they belonged to the *Ahl al-Kitab*, a religious community to whom a revelation was sent in written form (*Torah, Gospel*). Under Islamic governance they belonged to the *Dhimmis*, protégés of the state by treaty.

Image of “the Other”

Relationships to other countries and peoples are mentioned vaguely and only in passing. The Roman-Byzantine people are the most important of ‘The Others’ that are referred to. It is pointed out only indirectly that the Byzantine Empire wanted to expand (ibid.: 80) and this represented a danger to Islam. Real expansionist attempts into the Arab-Islamic region are not mentioned. Because of the ‘danger from outside’, Islamic countries were forced to build up their ability to conduct warfare by sea, set up a military fleet and expand important bases in Tyros, Tripoli, Acre and Alexandria amongst others (ibid.: 80).

In addition there were Jews, pagans and ‘neighbouring countries’. The latter are often described as being ‘hostile’ (ibid.: 59) and are attributed with forming ‘the threat from outside’ (ibid.: 60).

On the other hand, important intellectual input came from abroad. This feature is used to praise the Arabs’ openness and curiosity. It is stressed that Arabs imported foreign knowledge by translating Greek and Latin literature into the Arabic language. In this way, foreign disciplines, such as philosophy or astronomy, were spread abroad.

Other countries, for example Persia, Egypt and Palestine, are mentioned in the context of Islamic expansion. They (were) converted to Islam and therefore belonged to the Islamic *Umma* (community, nation).

The description of other religious groups is rather short. Jews, as one part of the original population of Medina, had economic influence in Medina (ibid.: 38). Jewish and Christian religion and property were respected as long as they kept to the treaty (ibid.: 38). Jews and Christians were furthermore welcome in the councils (ibid.: 134). In the course of the expansion of Islam Muhammad had the ambition also to convert Jews to Islam to turn them into allies (Haarmann: 42). Their refusal and participation with the Quraysh and other tribal Arab groups in a battle to conquer Medina (History of the Muslims and Arabs: 42), is still regarded by Muslims as one of the origins of the conflict between them and the Jews (Haarmann: 43). The ‘trench battle’ or siege of Medina (*Ghazwat al-Khandaq*) in which Muhammad defended Medina successfully against this attack (History of the Muslims and Arabs.: 42) is famous for the military strategy pursued.

Prominent Values and Terms

The most important value is religious devotion. Furthermore, education, progress (economic and social) and finally justice can be added. The latter is important in the context of religious devotion. Those features are apparently supported and promoted by representatives of Islamic governments alone.

Religious values are frequently mentioned. One chapter is dedicated to the life of Muhammad as a Prophet. Since the arrival of Islam, religion was meant to control every part of life. In all chapters that follow (governance of the caliphs and their progressive influence on the country), the first feature mentioned is always the religious progress that came with the new government.

Striving for education is one of the aims of Islam. One assignment tells the pupil to read *Suras* (sections) in the Koran which support the drive for education: *An-Nakhl*, *Al-Imran*, *Al-‘Alaq* and *Al-‘Anqabut* (ibid.: 139).

In the book it is emphasized that the Islamic government provided for the fair treatment of the population in the countries that were conquered during the campaigns (*Futuhat*, conquest of pagan countries). After the *Hijra*, the Prophet drafted a treaty (*Wathiqat al-Madina*) between

him and the local tribes in conquered Medina, by which their safety was ensured. This applied explicitly to the religion and property of the Jewish community: ‘... this is a scripture from Muhammad the Prophet (Nabi)... between the believers and the Muslims of Quraysh and Yathrib ... whoever of the Jews follows us will have victory ... the Jews will have good trade with the believers as long as they are warriors (*Muharibin*) ... and the Prophet fraternized (united) his followers from among the immigrants (*Muhajirun*) with the supporters (*Ansar*) from Medina’ (ibid.: 37). The treaty represented the first kind of constitution under Islam (ibid.: 38). The ‘Self-Test’ raises as a question for discussion whether this was one of the first political treaties in mankind’s history that manifested human rights (ibid.: 38). The fair treatment of the population in the conquered countries is also confirmed by the fact that the Islamic governments promoted all kinds of progress, both economic and social. In this context, the acceptance of monotheistic religions is one of the ‘aims of the unit’ in chapter one (ibid.: 3). Additionally, the ‘comparison between the point of view of Muslims and Jews concerning treaties’ (ibid.: 24) and the ‘respect of the religion and rites of monotheistic religions (*Ahl al-Kitab*)’ (ibid.: 25) are among the objectives of chapter two. The aim of making a general ‘comparison between the attitude of Muslims and Jews concerning treaties’ in chapter two, where Jews break the accord of Medina while the Muslims adhere to it indicates an attempt at eternalizing well-known stereotypes attributed to the two groups (ibid.: 24).

Language

In general, the language used is strictly neutral. Where Islamic features are concerned, only the positive perspective is shown. As regards the image of other countries or peoples, negative attributes are used a few times, for example, describing them as ‘hostile’ or ‘the threat from abroad/outside’, as mentioned earlier in this report. But as those descriptions are used rarely, this aspect should not be overstated.

Maps and Illustrations

Maps of Arab countries and the Islamic expansion provide a background for the texts. Furthermore, the geographical features of the new Arab-Islamic cities are shown. The pupil is

challenged to learn cities and countries by heart and think about the reason for their location, for example Baghdad. This city was founded by the caliph Mansur during the period of the Abbasids. By using the example of a map of ancient Baghdad, the advantage of its location near two rivers is shown.

A few coloured illustrations show important Islamic buildings (mosques and castles) that were erected during the governance of the caliphs mentioned, for example the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, Syria, and the *Al-Aqsa* Mosque in Jerusalem.

Conclusion

The relationship between Palestine and Israel and the features of both countries are not mentioned explicitly. But parallels to the current situation are quite obvious.

In particular, the treatment of the populations converted to Islam after the religious campaigns allows a comparison to be drawn. Israeli rule over the Palestinian occupied territories has caused under-development for more than three decades. Compared to this, Islamic governance over the conquered countries can be regarded as a quite different concept of occupation.

The peacefulness of the military campaigns as it is described in the book appears to be dubious. But nevertheless the campaigns brought progress and a more or less fair treatment of (religious) minorities.

The book does not go into the history of Palestine. This might be dealt with in a history textbook for a higher grade.

Tarikh - Al-Usur al-Wusta (History - The Middle Ages), grade 7, Ramallah 2002, 105 pages.

Contents

The topic is the Middle Ages (674–1403 C.E.). The main focus is on the actions of the crusaders in the part of the Middle East that is today Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, Syria and Egypt. There are four chapters, each divided into five to six sections.

The book starts with an introduction to the Middle Ages in Europe, which describes life in the cities and the role of the Church. Reasons for the Renaissance in Europe and the economic

upturn through new trade relations are the main points in this first chapter. The last section describes the run up to the crusades in Europe, for example, the preparation of European knights and princes for war.

The most important part of the book consists of the second and third chapters. Their topic is the European invasion of the Middle East, in other words, the crusades. The economic, social, political and religious situation in Europe and the Middle East shortly before the crusades is described. The second chapter tells about each of the eight crusades and the actions of the Franks, the crusaders. The third chapter deals with the victory of the Muslims over the crusaders.

The fourth and final chapter deals with the government of the Mamelukes, and their wars against the crusaders and the Mongols.

Didactic structure

Almost every chapter and section begins with a quotation from a modern Arab writer that describes the situation in the period of time mentioned in the section and makes it vivid.

At the end of each chapter there are two to four tasks, in which the pupils are asked to collect more information about a certain topic (a historical event or an important person) by themselves (e. g. in the library) or to write a report to consolidate one of the historical topics. For example, as the topic of the Roman culture in the Middle East is dealt with, the task is to "make a journey with the teacher to a church in Bethlehem or Sebastia to visit the remains of the Roman culture" (History: The Middle Ages: 21). In section 2.5 "Results of the European attack in the Middle East" there is one task which asks pupils to compare the European invasion in the Middle East to the Arab invasion in Andalusia. For this the pupil is supposed to take several perspectives into consideration.

There are also drawings and pictures of the Middle Ages, which are followed by two to four questions to test comprehension ("What do we see in the picture?"). Maps (13) play a minor role and show, for example, Europe and its countries, main cities in the Middle East, the division of the territories occupied by the crusaders and several battles led by the Sultan Salah ad-Din to liberate Hittin or Acre.

Historical events

The main events listed are the course of the eight crusades covered on pages 36–39: an overview of the duration, the background, the victims on both sides, the Popes and military leaders who initiated and led the battles; the detailed description of the battles of Hittin, Jerusalem and Acre; and the Peace of Ramle made with the crusaders, with excerpts from the peace treaty.

No events that would be decisive for the history of Palestine are left out. To some extent the description emphasizes the strength of the Muslims (see the section on use of language below).

Self Image

It is emphasized how politically weak the countries in the Middle East were shortly before the crusades: "Islamic countries were living in an economic, social and political chaos." (Ibid: 33–34). Reasons given include the insecure succession of the governors and the tribes who were fighting against each other. This is supposed to demonstrate the deficiency of the Arab countries during the time of armament in Europe.

However, the progressive Arab culture, represented by poets and writers, is stressed. The Arab-Islamic influence on the West is also stressed repeatedly, as several Arabic words were introduced to Western languages: for example, *Al-Kohol* (alcohol), *Al-Kimia* (chemistry) and *Al-Qahwa* (coffee). Europe benefited culturally but also in economic matters from the crusades, as goods were imported from the Middle East which were formerly imported from southern Europe, e.g. corn, sugar and trousers.

Image of "the Other"

The "other side" is represented by the crusaders who are intruders and occupiers. They are described as being aggressive and greedy.

The relation to the current situation in Palestine is obvious, which is confirmed by the use of language, as mentioned in the final section of this report. But the texts in general stay politically correct and do not draw a parallel explicitly.

The Middle Ages in Europe are discussed in four sections of the first chapter. The focus is on the geographical factors, that is, the setting of big cities in Europe (near a river or the sea) and the advantages and disadvantages connected to the setting; and on the feudalist system and its advantages and disadvantages. The European population was divided into three levels: the most powerful belonged to the church. Second was the military and finally there were the farmers, who constituted the majority among the population (ibid.: 8).

The second chapter deals with the preparation of European society for the crusades. One example is the Pope's famous speech in Clermont in the year 1095 C.E., by which he tried to win the support of knights and princes for the crusades (ibid.: 31). Reasons for the attack on and occupation of the Middle East were economic (to expand trade relations), religious (to free the holy sites and cities from the Muslims and expand Catholic power) and social (to distract the inhabitants of Europe from local problems, such as shortages of much-needed goods) (ibid.: 29).

As the Arab citizens knew Europeans rarely and only through trade relations, they met European warriors for the first time during the crusades. In one section the crusaders' courage is described: "the Franks prefer courageous people, they do not own accommodation but only for their knights and there are no other people among them but horsemen ... the knight enjoys the highest reputation among them" (ibid.: 48).

The crusaders' government and their administration of the occupied territories led to suppression and exploitation of the Arab inhabitants: "they (the crusaders) did a lot of inhuman deeds against the citizens of the occupied towns" (ibid.: 41). One "source of income" (ibid.: 41) for the foreign governors was "the raid of villages and farms ... and the harvest of the acres was under the rule of the crusaders ... and they lay embargoes on exports and imports and pilgrimages" (ibid.: 41).

Prominent values and terms: war, unity, religion and leadership

The description of the motive for war is quite clear. The war is caused by foreign intruders who have only selfish (religious and economic) reasons for the attack. The Islamic side is victorious through a clever and righteous defence and finally agrees to the treaty which brings peace and economic upturn to both sides and enables Christian pilgrimages. The crusades are being presented as pure attacks, which is expressed by the Arabic word *Al-Ghazu*. It means military campaign. The description of the military actions leading to the liberation of the occupied territories goes into the details even of single events, such as the battle of Hittin or Jerusalem.

Leadership plays an important role, as Salah ad-Din pursued many aims, for example, to unite Islamic peoples against the intruders and liberate the occupied territories: "Salah ad-Din was able to found an Islamic unity ... he spread among the Muslims the spirit of war and Jihad and he prepared a number of troops and fleets and because of this ships and weapons were produced" (ibid.: 60–61). In this context armament does not stand for aggression but for defence.

The victory is described as a religious victory: "and Salah Ad-Din pushed forward until the god of the Muslims was victorious ... the Islamic powers were strengthened in Jerusalem and because of this the crusaders weakened" (ibid.: 60). On page 70 the "course of the battle" is described: "and the battle began by provocations on both sides and the troops of the crusaders tried to escape the battle but the Muslim troops forced them to draw back inside Jerusalem ... and then the crusaders asked for peace but Salah Ad-Din refused" (ibid.: 70).

Peace was not reached easily as Salah Ad-Din hesitated to accept the European plea to end the war. He was afraid of agreeing to make peace with the crusaders: ". . .and the Sultan said I am afraid to make peace. Then the enemy will be strong. Still this territory belongs to him, and he will go out to conquer back the remaining territory (*Ukhafu an Uslih...Yaqua hadha al-'Adu, wa qad Baqiya lahum hadhihi-'l-Bilad, fa-Yakhraju li-Sti'adat Baqiyat Biladihim*)... and he said: I will not rest. And the Muslims plunged into the battle [to drive out the crusaders] and so the country woke up from the danger and he was happy and satisfied"(ibid.: 74). This might be interpreted as an appeal not to accept a rash solution.

Salah Ad-Din's failures are not mentioned and the strength of the enemy is played down. Salah Ad-Din's aim to expand his influence and power in the Islamic world, which he

pursued already before the war against the Franks (see Haarmann: 202–204), is left out. In summary, one can say that war is glorified to some extent, although the number of victims on both sides is mentioned. But the decisive element leading to peace is the devout, reasonable and wise leader.

Language

In general neither side is classified clearly negatively or positively. The foreigners/crusaders committed "attacks" and "wars" and the defence by the Muslims was the *Harakat al-Jihad al-Islami* (Movement of the Islamic Jihad). Concerning the crusades, the Arabic expression is always either *Hamla* (pushing forward, attack) or Frankish attack/invasion (*Harb/Ghazu*).

Several more words occur that remind of the current situation in Palestine, e.g. occupation, invasion and peace talks. In this context one could say that the authors tend to support peace talks and treaties with Israel, although under the pre-condition of a kind of equalization with the other side. Within this text, the balance has unfortunately been reached by force. The peace of Ramle (July 1292) provided for a temporary peace only. In the book it is not mentioned that the peace of Ramle in fact lasted many years or decades.

At-Tarikh – Al-Hadara Al-Arabiyya Al-Islamiyya (History – The Arab-Islamic Civilization), grade 8, , Ramallah 2002, 126 pages

Content

The book deals with the development of the Arab-Islamic civilization. The period of time covered starts at the beginning of Islam, especially its spread into the Arab countries, and includes the crusades, and the government of the Abbasides and the Omayyades. The limit to the time period is stated by mentioning the government of the caliphs. Most of the time the main features are only listed and are illustrated/described in a more or less extensive way. The focus of the whole book is on Islam and its influence in all parts of life, for example, morals in general, the judicial, political and monetary system, economic and cultural development and finally the defence of a state. Many times the religious sources, the Koran and the *Hadith* (sayings of the Prophet), are cited.

The first chapter deals with the foundation of Arab-Islamic civilization and culture. Chapter two deals with the political system, i.e. the Caliphate, the ministries, the "*Diwan*" (board of councillors of the king) and the administration of a country; and also with the military, which makes up the largest part of this chapter. The third chapter deals with the foundation and development of the judicial system since the beginning of Islam. The fourth chapter describes the economic and social situation in Arab-Islamic countries, dealing mainly with agriculture, industry and trade, and with the history of financial institutions and the expenses of the state. It also describes the structure of Arab-Islamic society, the segments that make up the population, and social life. The fifth and final chapter deals with the educational system, i.e. the position of education in general, religious education, the Arabic language and its literature, the main sciences, the Islamic arts and finally the influence of Arab-Islamic civilization on western civilization.

The role of Islam in the development of the features mentioned above is stressed very often: history is divided into the time before Islam (when there was very little development) and the time since Islam was introduced (when there was increasing growth in general). Famous caliphs and their deeds are mentioned repeatedly, as in this example: "and the caliph Ibn Al-Khattab was sent in the name of the prophet and encouraged the people to cultivate the land" (History – The Arab-Islamic Civilization: 51).

Historical events are mentioned only marginally and without stating dates. The crusades and the Arab invasion of southern Europe are referred to in the context of the Arab-Islamic influence on Europe. The language is strictly neutral, as in general neither side is classified negatively or positively. Didactically this book's conception is the same as that of the ones described above.

Self Image

The Arabs are defined mainly by their belonging to Islam and furthermore by traditions, food, music and garments. Social life is determined by Islam as "Islam is extremely interested in the creation of families, the prevention of adultery and prostitution and it provides for a good relationship between married couples and brothers and sisters" (History – The Arab-Islamic Civilization: 87). The countries are often referred to as "Arab-Islamic countries". Palestinian history is left out almost completely. There is a section defining the segments in the Arab-Islamic society during the relevant period. These range from powerful (caliph, minister) to

enslaved (captives from wars) and finally "*Ahl al-Dhimma*" (non-Muslims) and in this context Jews and Christians.

Although the influence on the west is mentioned (Chapter 5.7, 4 pages: e. g. Arabic words and industries have been adopted by western society), the superiority of Arab-Islamic civilization over western civilization during that time is played down or not seriously remarked upon. It would have been interesting to make a comparison between east and west. But maybe dealing more fully with this issue would invite a closer examination of the gap in development that exists today.

Image of "the other"

Contacts with other countries are rarely mentioned, except in a section about the influence of Arab-Islamic civilization on western civilization (four pages). In this context Italy (Sicily), Andalusia and Europe in general are named, as Arabs were settling in these countries for certain periods. Contact was also established through trade relations and the crusades. The European countries in which Arabs were settling were "interested in the sciences of the Arabs and therefore the Arabs introduced (their kind of) agriculture and industry to Europe" (ibid.: 122). Also, the crusaders learned a lot from the Arab-Islamic civilization and brought Arab agricultural or industrial knowledge to their home countries. But on the whole the book does not address other civilizations during that time. As a result there is no comparison between Arab-Islamic culture and others.

Prominent values and terms: Islam, progression, war

The role of Islam is emphasized throughout. The wide extension of Islam and the development that went with it is stressed very often: "before Islam the Arabs did not have a government or laws. Conflicts (among each other) were solved in the traditional way by the *Shaykh* (spiritual and political leader of a tribe) [as a mediator or judge]" (ibid.: 39). "Before Islam the Arabs were living as Bedouins and they did not need a development of sciences ... but as Islam came in they released themselves from ignorance (*Jahiliyya*)" (ibid.: 91). The characteristics of Arab civilization are defined by Islam only. Almost every section refers to it:

- Islam introduced human rights to human civilization for the first time (ibid.: 11). Unfortunately these rights are not stated in detail;
- The section on Social Life considers the role of the family and traditions in Islam, for example, the major religious holidays like *'Id al-Fitr* and *'Id al-Adha*;
- the chapter on the Educational System considers the importance of education in Islam. The quotation leading into the education chapter is the *Sura* (chapter) "*al-Alaq*" from the Koran, which refers to God as teaching man. Next comes a famous quotation by the Prophet Muhammad saying that "to strive for knowledge is a divine duty for every male and female Moslem" and "search for knowledge and may it be in China" (ibid.: 92). A few pages later a quotation locates "religious education as the first place among the sciences of the Moslems" (ibid.: 94);
- the first determinant named in relation to the increase of the international trade relations is the expansion of Islam (ibid.: 63).

Quantitatively speaking, the chapter about economic and social life makes up the largest chapter of the textbook (forty pages). It stresses the importance of progression in general and gives examples of the special features of Arab agriculture, such as irrigation.

Covering seven pages, the section on the military (the fleet and the army) contributes the biggest section or subdivision. The citation introducing it stresses that "war does not belong to the aims of Islam" (ibid.: 30). The contents of this section are the "ways of fighting", the classification of Arab-Islamic warriors as soldiers, horsemen, archers and so on, and finally the hierarchy among the military.

Conclusion

The book addresses the culture of Arab-Islamic countries but gives only a superficial picture of it. The period is limited only by naming the time of the Abbassides and the Omayyades but dates are seldom integrated into the text (except in an overview of the government of several caliphs) (ibid.: 18). Major Arab cities are mentioned only marginally, although some of them, such as Jaffa or Gaza, played an important role in international trade. Palestinian history and its features are not an item of this book. The obstacles faced by political or religious leaders in uniting the several tribes under Islam are not or only marginally mentioned. Only a positive perspective is given on all Arab-Islamic issues, which is too simplistic.

Finally, war is glorified to some extent by stressing military matters. On the other hand Islam is described as being peaceful (see the final paragraph of the last section above). In the context of the period covered in this textbook, Arab-Islamic countries were forced to take part in wars, so war is presented as a means of defence only.

Since the PNA defines the Palestinian Entity/State as a secular democratic one, the information presented in the textbook should be independent of the religion, namely Islam. As it is, it is rather apt to inculcate unquestioned religious values.

Summary

Textbooks grade 6 to 8

Palestinian history takes up a small part of the books and only in connection to Arab-Islamic development. This supports a pan-Arab view of the Middle East. In this way, self-image is determined more by language and religion and less by nationality.

The 'Image of the other' lacks clear description. The other side is mainly summed up as 'neighbouring countries', 'the Franks', the 'Roman-Byzantine people' and religious minorities in the Middle East, for example Jews and pagans. The mentioning of self-image and the image of the other should be well balanced, quantitatively and qualitatively speaking. 'The Others' are mainly presented in negative terms. As acceptance of monotheistic religions is one of the objectives of the textbook; more detailed background information about groups that follow such religions, for example, their rites and traditions, would support this significant aim.

Regardless of the current situation in Palestine, the stress on religious and military matters might be a negative influence. It is shown that the general way to solve conflicts, and to defend and preserve one's existence is by means of war. The view on the cause of conflicts clearly demonstrates the perception that aggression was always directed towards Palestine by outside forces and not the other way round. This leads to a rather negative long-term perspective on the relationship to Israel.

Comparisons with the current situation arise frequently. The example in the textbook for grade 6 of the treatment of regions conquered by Islamic leaders and converted to Islam is in sharp contrast to the bad living conditions for Palestinians under Israeli occupation now.

Relationships with other countries are described as being determined by interference and aggression. Yet they also include examples of fruitful connections, for example, the spread of Islam and the exchange of knowledge. The stress on development measures during the period of Islamic rule also supports a positive self-image. Education and tolerance also play an important role, but only in connection to Islam.

Textbooks analysed:

State of Palestine, Ministry of Education:

Ta'rikh al-Arab wa 'l-Muslimin (The History of the Arabs and Muslims), grade 6 (of elementary school), Ramallah, 2000

Tarikh - Al-Usur al-Wusta (History - The Middle Ages), grade 7, Ramallah, 2002

At-Tarikh - Al-Hadara Al-Arabiyya Al-Islamiyya (The Arab-Islamic Civilization), grade 8, Ramallah, 2002

Additional Literature:

Haarmann, Ulrich: *Geschichte der Arabischen Welt*, München: Beck 1994³

“7 days”, Meron Rapaport, Oren Meiri, Israel, 13.11.2002 (Homepage of the Generaldelegation Palästinas www.palaestina.org: news: *Entwurzelt*)