

PEDAGOGY

**TEACHING THE HISTORY OF BYZANTIUM AT
GEORGIAN SCHOOLS ACCORDING TO THE
ANALYSIS OF CURRICULA AND TEXTBOOKS**

Madona Mikeladze, associate professor

Department of Pedagogical Science, Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University, Georgia
ORCID ID: <https://orsid.org/0000-0002-3179-1429>

DOI: https://doi.org/10.31435/rsglobal_ws/12072018/5997

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 14 May 2018
Accepted: 25 June 2018
Published: 12 July 2018

KEYWORDS

byzantine;
history;
school curriculum;
school books;
teaching of history

ABSTRACT

The Byzantine Empire, which existed for more than 1000 years, holds a special place in the history of civilization. It was the largest medieval Christian state on the crossroad of Europe and Asia. The Byzantine culture belongs to the medieval Christian culture, but it has specific peculiarities in comparison to the Western Christian culture.

The phenomenon of Byzantium, as the successor of the Roman state tradition and as the source of Christian culture, is of particular importance in the development of Georgia's historical processes.

Understanding the historical processes of the V-XV centuries in Georgia is quite difficult without knowing the history of Byzantium. We cannot analyze even the later period without knowing Byzantium, because this country has left an indelible mark on Georgia, especially on its culture. The purpose of the present article is to show what the position of the Byzantine history is in the national curriculum and school books.

Citation: Madona Mikeladze. (2018) Teaching the History of Byzantium at Georgian Schools According to the Analysis of Curricula and Textbooks. *World Science*. 7(35), Vol.1. doi: 10.31435/rsglobal_ws/12072018/5997

Copyright: © 2018 **Madona Mikeladze**. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the **Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY)**. The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) or licensor are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.

Introduction. Byzantium was a thousand-year-long civilization, which influenced all the countries of the eastern Mediterranean, the Balkans and Western Europe throughout the Middle Ages. From the sixth to the fifteenth century, this influence waxed and waned but was a constant. Its civilization drew on pagan, Christian, Greek, Roman, ancient and specifically medieval components. Its cultural and artistic influences are now recognized as a lasting inheritance. But in addition, fundamental aspects of government such as the development of an imperial court with a diplomatic service and civilian bureaucracy, the ceremony of coronation, as well as the female exercise of political power, all developed in Byzantium (Herrin, 2007, P. 10).

The phenomenon of Byzantium, as the follower of Roman traditions, as the source of Christian culture, has a special significance in the process of historical development of the Slavs, Georgians and Armenians.

It is difficult to understand the history of Georgia of the V-XV centuries, as well as the historical processes taking place in Georgia in the following period without knowing the history of Byzantium, because this country has left an indelible mark on Georgia, especially on its culture.

Byzantine culture embodies the French historian Fernand Braudel's notion of the *longue durée*, the long term: that which survives the vicissitudes of changing governments, newfangled fashions or technological improvements, an ongoing inheritance that can both imprison and inspire (Herrin, 2007).

Teaching the Byzantine history at secondary schools of Georgia is defined by the national curriculum and standard and program of history of primary, basic and secondary stages.

The stepped subject standard of the national curriculum determines the mandatory subjective requirements (what the student should be capable of and know). Annual programs are planned through compulsory study topics. The study topic is a functional context that allows the integrated and interconnected teaching of parts of the standard.

The subject of history is included in the subjective group of social sciences in the national curriculum. In all three stages of general education (primary, basic and secondary school) this subject is taught in coordination with the consideration of the student's age peculiarities and capabilities. The educational process is built on the principle of heredity and continuity.

The program of the history is of a recommendatory character and shows the possible ways of realizing the requirements of the standard. The program consists of the following sections: study topic; subject issues; the concepts processed within the topic; key questions; activities; list of ideas for complex / project tasks; assessment indicators; indigenous presentations.

School history textbooks are based on the list of compulsory issues written in the program.

The national curriculum does not define the issues required for expanding topics. The teachers and the authors of the textbooks are authorized to select the issues themselves for each topic. However, it is mandatory to comply with the following requirements:

- The issues from the history of both - the world and Georgia should be presented in each topic;
- When selecting the issues, focus should be made on displaying key events and personalities for the history of Georgia.

This is the principle the subject programs of history and school textbooks are made up with. The history of Byzantium is also reflected in these programs along with the history of other countries with the chronological principle.

Methodology. The article aims to show what the place of the Byzantine history is in the national curriculum and in school textbooks.

The empirical part of the research is based on the data analysis of questionnaire conducted among teachers and students. Mostly, the work is based on a table research. The results of local surveys and scientific literature were also employed in the analysis.

To collect the data the following instruments were employed: a) table research analysis; b) analysis of secondary data; c) review of scientific literature. The analysis of documents in educational policy was carried out during the research process, including national curriculum and the history school books.

Data analysis. Byzantium has an important place in the subject program of the history of the national curriculum. The aim of the authors of the national curriculum was to educate students with the history of Byzantium as well as the history of Georgia-Byzantine relationship at different stages (VII-XI).

For example, the subject "history" at the basic level means the integrated learning and teaching of the world and Georgian history. During the training course the student will be familiar with the most important episodes of Georgian history from ancient times and connects them to the key events of the world history, including of the history of Byzantium; will study the social history of different epochs (religion, culture, economics); will see that modernity and the past are closely related to each other.

In the basic and secondary level standard and the curricula of history (VII-XI), while teaching the world history, including Byzantium, the emphasis is made on the analysis of historic events and the connection of the past and the future with modern socio-political processes.

The list of compulsory content issues that are directly or indirectly associated with Byzantium, for the different classes in the national curriculum looks like the following:

VII grade – from the ancient period to the middle ages. Reforms of Constantine the Great to save the Roman Empire (attitude towards religion); Great resettlement of the people (the fall of the Roman Empire and the barbarous kingdoms in the territory of Europe); "Byzantine Golden Age"- the attempt to restore the unity of Rome, the reconstruction, two histories of Procopius of Caesarea.

Byzantium - Crusaders, Byzantium and eastern states: Byzantium and Seljuks; Crusades (European pilgrims, Crusades through the eyes of contemporaries); Ottomans in the Near East; from Byzantine restoration to the collapse of Constantinople (National Curriculum, 2018-2024).

VIII grade - Confrontations in the Middle East: Confrontation of Byzantium and Sassanid Iran in VI-VII centuries; The Arab Caliphate; Turk-Seljuks and the Near East, the Battle of Manzikert; Crusades; The Ottoman Empire, the fall of the Byzantine Empire and its world historical Importance (National Curriculum, 2018-2024).

XI grade - "Old rivals in the New Reality - Christian Byzantium and Mazdean Iran in the V-VI centuries: the battle of Iran and Byzantium in the Near East and South Caucasus in the V century; Justinian I (the attempts to restore Rome in the West and the old imperial claims in the East (the relationship with Khosro or Shirvan, the Great Wars in Egrisi); Justice of Justinian (the importance and scales of its influence), culture and rebuilding.

Establishment of medieval European civilization; Fight for influence in the Christian world in the Middle Ages (a) Heracles Caesar and his epoch, his campaign in the East and in Georgia, the issue of foreign political orientation in the countries of South Caucasus; b) Iconoclasm and its political and religious consequences in the West and East; c) The united Western Europe under the crown of Charles the Great, the confrontation between the Pope of Rome and the Patriarch of Constantinople; Macedonian Dynasty and Georgia, East-West Schism and Georgia, foreign political aspirations of Georgian kings.

Crusade epoch; New Reality in the Middle Ages: a) The "Universities Era" in Europe and the East (including Georgia), European and Oriental philosophical ideas, science, literature; "Golden Age" of Georgian culture.

The epoch of the Renaissance - the Byzantine Decadence and the beginning of the Renaissance in Italy, the characteristics of Renaissance and Humanism, the European centers of the Renaissance.

Fall of Constantinople: origin of the Ottoman State and the first conquests; Catholic Europe and Byzantium; The importance of the fall of Byzantium for Europe and Georgia (cultural, economic and political aspects); Anti-Ottoman Coalition and Georgia "(National Curriculum, 2018-2024).

Compulsory issues written in the national curriculum are in the students' history textbooks.

The history of Byzantium is mostly reflected in the history textbook of the XI grade. This book summarizes the information on Byzantium in different paragraphs in the previous grades. It should be noted that if not this textbook, the students would have less possibility of critical understanding of Byzantine history.

In the 25th paragraph of the history textbook – "the fall of the Western Roman Empire. East Roman Empire – Byzantium" the student has an opportunity to understand how the Byzantine Empire was created, what was its state arrangement. Authors characterize the Empire as a culturally developed and strong state in Europe and the Middle East. They are talking about the concept of Byzantium of the authorities: "Unlike the West, the Emperor's authority and the unified state Christian conception of the state were established in the East-in Byzantium" (History, XI, P. 135).

Naturally, when it comes to Christianity as a world religion, the authors could not miss the personality of Constantine I the Great and his role in the formation and dissemination of Christianity. Although fragmented, students learn the role of Christian-philosophical doctrines of Cappadocian fathers in the development of Georgian culture. As for the World Christian ecclesiastical congregations, the analysis of the events is quite extensive in the textbook.

The causes of confrontation of Byzantium and Iran in the VI century and the events developed during the reign of Emperor Justinian I are detailed in the textbook. In paragraph 35 of the textbook - "Education and Science. "Universities Era" in Europe" Byzantium is characterized as an heir to ancient culture. The separate paragraph of the textbook is dedicated to the history of Byzantium of VII-XII centuries (History, XI, P. 225).

Of course, the topic of Byzantium has been exaggerated in the events of the V-XV centuries of Georgia: Byzantium-Iran relations and their influence on Georgia; Byzantium-Georgia relations in the XI century;

More particularly the students learn about the epoch of crusades, the fall of Byzantium and its significance for Europe and Georgia.

This is the way the authors estimate the world-historical significance of the fall of Constantinople: "Ottoman conquest resulted in falling the Eastern Christian Empire and the Islamic Empire took its place. This was the hardest psychological blow to the Christian world. For the West, the fall of Constantinople meant the detachment of the part of the East Christendom, which was at the beginning of its civilization and culture. Many Greek scholars took refuge in Western Europe, contributing to the advancement of science and culture in the Western Christian world. Some historians consider the fall of Constantinople as a watershed of medieval and the new epoch. The conquest of Constantinople by Turks has destroyed the importance of Byzantium as the trade route connecting the East and the West. The Europeans were forced to look for new marine routes, which partly turned out to be the push for major geographical discoveries. The consequences of the destruction of the Byzantine Empire was very difficult for Georgia. Georgia turned out to be an Islamic circle. Contacts with Christian Europe were extremely reduced (History, XI, P. 354).

The main key questions in the national curriculum are derived from the stepped key questions and are put in the specific context of the topic. The key question within the study topic represents the role of the goal of the lesson(s). For example, why did Georgian kings try to control North Caucasus passes? Why did Byzantium and Sasanid Iran supported them? Why did Georgian kings take Byzantine titles? Why did Georgians have relations with European crusaders? Why did the Georgian kings correspond to the Roman popes? Why did the collapse of Byzantium and the huge geographical discoveries bring negative results for Georgia?

The enduring understandings are determined by basing on the results of the national curriculum. These are general understandings that should be established during studying the topic in the student's long-term memory based on the student's previous understandings in order to make it easier to reach the goals set within the topic. The enduring understandings are the way of thinking to implement the acts of understanding. For example:

- Strengthening Caucasian passages in order to stop nomads had strategic importance for Byzantium and Persia; That is why the role of Georgian states (Kartli, Egrisi) in international politics was increasing;
- In the medieval ages Georgia was included in the "Byzantine Commonwealth";
- Medieval Ages is the epoch of crusades and the great Asian Empires (Turkish Seljuks, Mongols);
- Medieval Ages is the epoch of knights, castles and fortresses;
- In the Middle Ages "Silk Road" connected Europe and Asia to each other. It also crossed Georgia;
- The collapse of the Byzantine Empire has virtually ceased the relations with Georgia's western states;

Discussion. We agree with a well-known French scholar, Charles Michelle Dill, that the history of Byzantium should not be forgotten or ignored, if we want to see the world history in the perspective of the future. "This old history, quite poorly known in our time and a bit forgotten, in contradiction to the common belief, cannot be considered as a dead history. The trace of its influence still has been intended for ideological or political plans even today, and for those peoples who inherited it, continue to keep the essence and seed of the future. That is why the Byzantine culture deserves our attention on a bilateral point of view: it is equally interesting to us what this culture itself was, and what it records in the history of our time as well (Dill, 1998).

We share the viewpoint of historian Judith Herrin about why we should know the Byzantine history:

"First, because we should be aware of Byzantium's exceptionally persistent, skilled fusion of traditions and inheritance, and how it created a varied and self-confident civilization that grew as often as it lost ground and fought to the end to survive. It is astounding that Byzantium continued after 1204, when the West captured and occupied its capital for fifty-seven years, even if the mini-empires which sprang to life in its place were not truly imperial states. Something of that same combination of resources – classical, pagan, Christian, eastern and western – was in the founding DNA of Byzantium and provided a reliably constant life force across the centuries.

Second, because the spirit of Byzantium survives not just the capture of 1453, but also the intervening centuries between then and now, and its legacy lives on beyond the world of central Europe, the Balkans, Turkey and the Middle East" (Herrin, 2007).

According to Cameron A. Byzantium and the Byzantines are worth studying for themselves, not merely in comparison with classical antiquity or as transmitters of classical learning for the benefit of the West. The Ottoman Empire did not merely succeed that of Byzantium; it permitted the continuance of Orthodox culture and thereby preserved the 'legacy' of Byzantium to find expression in a revival of Orthodoxy in the post-communist states of Eastern Europe. Byzantium is worth studying for all these reasons, but above all, Byzantium is interesting and important as a centralized and complex state, which encompassed end the transition from the ancient to the medieval world and at the other the beginnings of the Renaissance and the rise of Western Europe (Cameron, 2006, P. 198).

Conclusions. Thus, analyzing the textbooks of the VII-XII grades of the basic and secondary stages of History Program showed that students have an opportunity to get acquainted with the history of Byzantium from its establishment to destruction, Byzantine-Georgia's difficult and contradictory (sometimes good neighborly and sometimes confrontational) relations, the role of Byzantium in the world's historical processes.

Also, students are able to develop historical thinking skills: they can explain the causes of historical events in Byzantium and analyze their results; Ability to see the historical process in various aspects (political, social, economic, cultural, religious); Establishing reasons for existence of different interpretations on historical events and personality, comparison and assessment of different explanations. Searching for historical sources, comparing and analyzing historical material; Writing a historical topic; Participation in debates on historical topic.

By teaching the history of Byzantium this way, the student feels that the history is a continuous process that the most important political, social and moral problems for modern society are mostly caused by the changes in the centuries and millenniums.

REFERENCES

1. Akhmeteli, N., Kupatadze, B., Abdaladze, G., Murgulia, N., History. XI. Student's book. Tbilisi: Diogene. [online], available at: http://old.eqe.ge/uploads/Grifireba/GRIFIREBULEBI_2012/ISTORIA/Diogene/Istoria11.pdf, (accessed: 15.03.2018);
2. Cameron, A. (2006). The Byzantines. Blackwell Publishing;
3. Diehl, S. (1998). History of the Byzantine Empire. Translator Bachana Bregvadze. Tbilisi: Neker;
4. Herrin, J. (2007). Byzantium: The Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire. Penguin books;
5. Kiguradze, N., Sanikidze, G., Gordeziani, L., Pirckhalava, L., Gachechiladze L. History. XI. Student's book. Tbilisi: Bakur Sulakauri Publishing. [Online], available at: http://old.eqe.ge/uploads/Grifireba/GRIFIREBULEBI_2012/ISTORIA/sulakauri/istoria11520gv.pdf, (accessed: 16.04.2018);
6. Medzmariashvili E., Papaskiri, T., Daushvili, R., Giorgobiani, L. History. VII. Student's book. Tbilisi: KLIO. [Online], available at: http://old.eqe.ge/uploads/Grifireba/GRIFIREBULEBI_2012/ISTORIA/ISTORIA7MOSCAVLEKLIO_opt.pdf, (accessed: 1.03.2018);
7. Medzmariashvili, E., Papaskiri, T., Daushvili, R., Giorgobiani, L. History. VIII. Student's book.. Tbilisi: KLIO. [Online], available at: http://old.eqe.ge/uploads/Grifireba/GRIFIREBULEBI_2012/ISTORIA/ISTORIA8MOSCAVLEKLIO.pdf, (accessed: 15.05.2018);
8. National Curriculum. 2018-2024. Available at: <http://ncp.ge>
9. Sanikidze, G., Gordeziani, L., Pirckhalava, L. History. VII. Student's book. Tbilisi: Bakur Sulakauri Publishing. [Online], available <http://www.mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=4839&lang=geo>, (accessed: 12.04.2018);
10. Sanikidze, G., Gordeziani, L., Gachechiladze, R., Mimoshvili, Z. History. VIII. Student's book. Tbilisi: Bakur Sulakauri Publishing. [Online], available at: http://old.eqe.ge/uploads/Grifireba/GRIFIREBULEBI_2012/ISTORIA/sulakauri/Istoria8moscavle50.pdf, (accessed: 25.03.2018).