CASTING THE "OTHER": THE TREATMENT OF MUSLIMS IN QUEBEC AND INDIAN TEXTBOOKS

Ratna Ghosh, James McGill Professor and William C. Macdonald Professor of Education, Faculty of Education, McGill University, Montreal.

Amina Triki-Yamani, Ph.D., Université de Paris X, and Associate researcher, Canada Research Chair on Education and Ethnic Relations, Université de Montréal.

CONTEXT

This article focuses on the treatment of Muslims in two pluralistic societies, India and Quebec, where the integration of this community is still a challenge even if the historical and socio-political contexts are different. The post 9/11 international geopolitical context, with its ensuing Islamophobia and racism resulting from the increasing Muslim immigration and cultural visibility in Canada and the province of Quebec, and the western coverage of terrorism and conflicts involving Muslims all over the Muslim World, justify our interest in studying the representation of Islam, the Muslim World and Muslims living in both Quebec and India. Furthermore, on the educational level, several studies have demonstrated the existence of biases and stereotype regarding Islam and Muslims, and the treatment is clearly marked by more factual errors and ethnocentric biases than that of other religions, civilizations or ethnic groups.

Textbooks represent the curriculum and are very important tools through which knowledge is transmitted to students. While textbooks have sometimes been at the center of controversy it is the history textbooks that seem to have attracted the most attention. This is not surprising since history textbooks are regarded as the state's instrument to transmit narratives defining the national culture. Both in Canada and in India, the State suggests textbooks to be used in schools. While education is a provincial responsibility in Canada, in India education is a concurrent subject list in the constitution. This means that state governments (and the union territories) as well as the central government are responsible for education. In the province of Quebec the *Education Act* defines the rights and responsibilities regarding instructional materials. But it is ultimately the Principals and teachers who are responsible for it and this is why a variety of materials exist. Similarly, in India the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), has the mandate to produce textbooks for national use but their acceptance throughout the country remains small. Even when formally accepting NCERT books, schools run by community groups and political parties in different states in India use a variety of supplementary books in multiple languages. So a major problem of analyzing history textbooks in both Quebec and India is the variety of textbooks in use.

Around 14% of Indians are Muslims (over 138 million according to the 2001 census). Islam came to India when the religion spread in the 7th century and Muslims are a part of India's religious and cultural heritage. Not only has there been a significant integration of Hindus and Muslims but Muslims have also been prominent in the historical, cultural and economic development of the country. The presence of Muslims in Canada became significant from the mid-1960s, following a non-discriminatory immigration policy that allowed many migrants from the Third World to reach the country (Abu-Laban 1980, 1997). In 2001, the Muslim community represented 2% of the total Canadian population; 60.8% of Muslims lived in Ontario, 18.7% in Quebec and 20.4% in the other provinces (Census, 2001). Muslim immigration is increasing, making Islam the fastest growing religion in Canada and in Quebec (Statistics Canada, 2001, 2011).

MUSLIMS IN FRENCH-QUEBEC TEXTBOOKS

This section introduces some results of a larger research on *The Treatment of Islam, the Muslim World and Muslims in the French-Quebec Textbooks*. Studies on ethnocentrism (Mc Andrew, 1986; Blondin; 1990; Mc Andrew, Oueslati, Helly, 2009, 2011) have shown that the treatment of Islam and Muslim in Quebec textbooks has been characterized by errors, omissions and the representation of often-negative

stereotypes. New textbooks that have been approved and used in the context of the last Quebec school reform (1999-2010) have been improved with regard to the treatment of Islam and Muslims in Quebec and Canada, even if some stereotypes and bias still exist.

Qualitatively speaking, these recent textbooks are characterized by more depth and objectivity. A change is clearly noticeable from openly negative views and attitudes in the 1980s and a less negative but very superficial and biased coverage full of errors in the 1990s (Oueslati, Mc Andrew, Helly, 2009, 2011), to a more complex, precise and balanced coverage in the new textbooks. While Muslims are absent from textbooks in the 1980s, they are much more present in the 1990s, possibly because of their low number in the 1980s and early 1990s. They are more present as foreigners than as citizens living in Quebec and Canada.

More explicit instructions in the new curriculum guidelines and many controversies that have targeted the Muslim community in the last 30 years in Quebec may also have constrained authors to deal more carefully with the topic of Islam and Muslims in textbooks. In the first analysis (2005-2006) linked to the research cited above, very few excerpts (19 out of 190) deal with Muslims living in Quebec, which gives the impression that this is a phenomenon outside the host society, especially if we take into account the number of excerpts relating to Muslims living abroad, particularly in the Muslim world.

From this global quantitative assessment, one can see that Muslims are overwhelmingly present as an alien reality in Quebec and Canada. The treatment of the Muslim community in French-Quebec history textbooks concerns mainly Muslim newcomers (immigrants, refugees, foreign students). Muslims as long-standing Quebecois or Canadians are discussed in very few excerpts. The excerpts are divided between positive treatment (interreligious dialogue, integration successful), and neutral (nutritional aspects) or negative (among others, around the place of religion in the public sphere). In the excerpts that focus on the latter issue, Muslims are not presented as citizens who contribute positively to Quebec society. Rather, they are constructed as a threat to the ongoing secularization of Quebec society, broadly conceived as the elimination of religion from the public sphere.

Excerpts from high school history textbooks depict the veiling of Muslim women as running counter to the process of secularization of the public sphere in Quebec and to certain fundamental rights of the individual, such as gender equality. In one of these excerpts, an explicit opposition is established between, on the one hand, the veil, the subjugation of women, fundamentalism and Sharia, and on the other hand, the Western values of freedom and equality among human beings. Even if they are at the center of these non-consensual issues, textbooks never give Muslims the floor to defend their choices or to present their views.

In a more recent content analysis (2011-2012) of secondary-level (high school) ERC textbooks, 144 excerpts included in the three sections addressed in ERC (ethics, religious culture and dialogue) relate to Muslims and Islam in general and in 52 of those, Muslims and Islam of Quebec in particular are the focus. In the only section "Religious culture," 37 excerpts cover Muslims in the Quebec context. ERC is thus by far the discipline that gives the best qualitative and quantitative treatment of Islam and Muslims. In the part relating to "Quebec's religious heritage" (34 excerpts), we identified three themes that reflect the Muslim presence in Quebec. The first, on the material expressions of religion, is the one that contains the most excerpts (15). They consist mostly of descriptions of Muslim places of worship in Quebec, such as the Saint-Laurent mosque (1965). The second theme concerns the facts relating to the Muslim community in Quebec (9 of 34 excerpts). Most of the nine excerpts have headings that indicate the role of Islam in the evolution and diversification of the religious landscape in Quebec in recent decades: "The Changing Face of Quebec," "A religious heritage in progress," "Muslims' Immigration to Quebec." The third theme relates to the impact of Islamic customs on Quebec values and norms (10 quotes). Five excerpts contain several biases and stereotypes about the inclusion of religious diversity; they describe accommodation confined to three religious groups: the Jewish, Muslim and Sikh communities.

The second part, "Fundamental elements of religious traditions," focuses on sacred stories, rites and rules in Islam. One excerpt on stories depicting supernatural beings is linked to the Quebec context. When addressing the rites and rules, the authors miss the opportunity to link specific practices of Islam to the Quebec context, such as funeral rites and the presence of Muslim cemeteries in Quebec, such as the Laval cemetery.

Two excerpts on the Muslim community in Quebec are included in the third part, "Representations of the divine and mythical and supernatural beings." They are listed under "Images of God from elsewhere" and talk about Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism. The first shows on the same page one of the symbols of several religions. One could see calligraphy of the word "Allah." A question aimed to students, asks: "What kinds of behaviours are adopted within people with representations of life or of the divine which are different from ours?" One can see an "us/them" dichotomy clearly stated in the questions.

MUSLIMS IN INDIAN TEXTBOOKS

The British historiography of India had been largely dominated by a religious interpretation reflecting a communal periodization of Indian history in pre-colonial times. NECRT textbooks have not been able to make a qualitative breakthrough from that tradition of Ancient, Medieval and Modern periods being identified with Hindu, Muslim and British rule. However, NCERT books emphasized a harmonious relationship between Hindus and Muslims.

A move by political parties and Hindu nationalists to socialize children into a non-secular view of history started in the 1950s that glorified ancient India and Hinduism during the pre-Muslim period as being the pure and true India. The Moghul period was depicted in terms of Muslim oppression in which Hindus suffered, Muslims who stressed "religious sanction" rather than rationalism drew attention to the development of an Islamic revivalist movement. The first War of Independence (1857), also known as the Sepoy Mutiny, had shown how dangerous the unity of Hindus and Muslims could be to the political authority of the British. The Government of India Act the very next year (1858) brought an end to the East India Company's rule and placed India directly under the British Crown. Then began the policy of divide and rule, especially among Hindus and Muslims. Some books reject a crude "divide and rule" analysis in favour of British attempts to attract Muslims to their rule and the simultaneous development of a Muslim political identity. The emergence of a Muslim political identity was also influenced by the Hindu revival and social reform movement, which developed to confront colonial rule and challenge the imposition of Western knowledge at the expense of indigenous culture and knowledge.

The identification of Hindus and Muslims as separate communities came during the British period when the first census took place in India in 1872. With religious identity becoming the political identity, the creation of the communal problem through various means such as creation of separate electorates for Hindus and Muslims was greatly to the advantage of the colonizers. The inception of modernity and colonialism in India coincides with the birth of nationalism and the creation of "minorities" (others). Despite the common "othering" of the British by initially unified Hindus and Muslims, ultimately the colonizer's idea of two irreconcilable "nations" of Hindus and Muslims became real at the end of British rule in 1947, with the birth of Pakistan as an Islamic State. India became a secular Republic. The nationalist government recognized the urgent need to decolonize the educational system, and the NCERT was set up with the mandate that history textbooks promote the ideological agenda of national integration based on equality and secularism. The authors of history textbooks generally promoted this view, but communal forces threatening this vision bring about the controversies over textbooks in India. Communalism invokes history to gain the legitimacy for constructing India as a Hindu nation and to create a religious identity and cast the "outsider" as enemy. Although ethnic/religious movements emerged in various parts of the country they were not given any mention in textbooks. The National Policy on Education (NPE) was announced in 1986 to introduce a common framework to safeguard the values of secularism, socialism and equality.

The main focus of the controversy in history textbooks is on communal distortions and interpretations through secular and communal perspectives of different political parties. Hindu fundamentalist forces alleged factual inaccuracies and biased interpretation of the initial history texts despite their academic quality. The first textbook controversy in India occurred in 1977 when the Janata Party was in power: a suggestion was made in Parliament for the withdrawal of certain history textbooks which were said to be too sympathetic to Muslim Rulers in the medieval period while neglecting to glorify the Hindu heritage, thereby giving a prejudiced view of Indian history. Secondly, there was objection to the manner in which Hindu nationalist leaders such as Tilak and Aurobindo Ghosh were portrayed, thus attacking the secular and scientific writing of some of the best historians in the country. During the two years that the Janata Party was in power in a coalition with the Hindu communal Jana Sangh party, attempts were made to ban, delete and rewrite sections of school history textbooks. But the attempt to ban the existing textbooks failed partly because NCERT resisted this, but largely because of a nationwide protest against this move.

A smaller second controversy took place in 1992 with the Congress Party in power, when an announcement was made in Parliament that a group of eminent historians had been approached to write the history of post-independent India to be included in the school syllabus by 1997. While this was a move by the more secular Congress party to curtail any ideological perspectives by the Hindu parties, it was seen as an attempt by the ruling Congress party to put forward their version of contemporary India.

The third recent Hindu fundamentalist attempts to transform history as a narrative of Hindu religious nationalism casting the "outsider" as enemy came with the election of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP is a Hindu nationalist party) to power (1998-2004). In 2000, NCERT was asked to develop a National Curriculum framework for Education with an aim to instil an Indian national identity in schools as well as for post-secondary students. It was the revision of the entire school curriculum by NCERT

(under the direction of a BJP appointed Director) that created a huge controversy all over India. Historians were appointed from the right-wing Hindu parties (RSS, BJP) to rewrite history textbooks because the existing textbooks were alleged to have factual inaccuracies and biased interpretation.

The BJP party lost the elections in 2004 and the new Congress coalition in power has moved swiftly to replace history textbooks along with references to forms of "safronization" of the curriculum. Nevertheless, the fundamentalist forces have attempted to transform history as a narrative of Hindu religious nationalism whenever it has been possible.

CONCLUSION

Both in India and in the province of Quebec, despite government jurisdiction over education, a variety of textbooks are in use. In India, since independence and the creation of a national institute of education and research (NCERT), history textbooks have attempted to focus on secularism, socialism and equality given a country which is not only very diverse but also very unequal. But several textbook controversies have revolved around differences in communal and secular perspectives. In Quebec, until the recent school reforms, Muslims and Islam have been treated negatively in general. Although they are still treated as "aliens" who are a threat to secularization, there is a change from openly negative treatment to a more balanced view.

REFERENCES

Abu-Laban, B. [1980] An olive branch on the family tree. The Arabs in Canada. Toronto: McClelland and Steward Ltd. Generation Series.

Abu-Laban, B. [1997] Arabs. In P. R. Magocsi (Ed.) Encyclopedia of Canada's People: 202-212. Toronto: *University of Toronto Press*.

Oueslati B., Mc Andrew, M. & Helly, D. [2011] "Islam and Muslim Cultures in Quebec French-language Textbooks over Three Periods: 1980s, 1990s, and the Present Day", *Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society*, 3(1).

Mc Andrew, M. [1986] *Études sur l'ethnocentrisme dans les manuels scolaires de langue française au Québec*. Montréal: Les publications de la Faculté des sciences de l'Éducation, Université de Montréal.

Mc Andrew, Oueslati, M.B. & Helly, D. [2009] "The coverage of the Muslim world in Quebec french language High-school textbooks." *Revue Internationale Schulbuchforschung/International Textbook Review*. 30: 445-465.

Mc Andrew, Marie, "The Muslim Community and Education in Quebec: Controversies and Mutual Adaptation", in Mc Andrew, M., Ipgrave, J, Triki-Yamani, A. (dir.) [2010] The Education of Minority Muslim Students: Comparative Perspective. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 11(1).

L'AUTRE ET SA REPRÉSENTATION: LE TRAITEMENT DES MUSULMANS DANS LES MANUELS SCOLAIRES AU QUÉBEC ET EN INDE

Le présent article porte sur le traitement des musulmans dans les manuels scolaires du secondaire au Québec et en Inde. Contrairement au Québec, les musulmans de l'Inde font partie intégrante de l'histoire séculaire de ce pays. Très peu présents au Québec avant les années 1960, les musulmans deviennent de plus en plus nombreux si bien que de nos jours, ils forment la communauté religieuse non chrétienne la plus importante de la province. En outre, mentionnons un autre contraste important: le gouvernement du Québec est responsable des programmes scolaires dans la province alors qu'en Inde, les manuels peuvent être prescrits par les États ou par le gouvernement central. Les écoles peuvent utiliser l'un ou l'autre type de manuel ou encore les deux.

Au Québec, les nouveaux programmes d'Histoire et éducation à la citoyenneté (HEC) et d'Éthique et culture religieuse (ECR) du niveau secondaire, qui relèvent tous deux le défi du vivre-ensemble dans une société pluraliste, sont ceux qui traitent le plus des musulmans, tant au Québec qu'au plan international. En Inde, les manuels d'histoire du secondaire se concentrent plutôt sur l'analyse des forces socio-politiques en présence et la recherche d'unification entre musulmans et hindous tout en focalisant sur un certain nationalisme, lequel a représenté le courant le plus important après l'Indépendance.

Dans cette première partie réservée aux manuels québécois, nous présentons la synthèse des résultats de l'analyse d'environ 70 extraits tirés de cinq manuels (dix volumes) d'HEC et de quatre manuels d'ECR (six volumes) qui portent sur la communauté musulmane du Québec. Les manuels

d'HEC abordent principalement les musulmans dans le chapitre réservé à la « Christianisation de l'Occident » en secondaire 2. Faisant l'objet de peu d'extraits, contrairement aux musulmans d'ailleurs, les musulmans québécois sont présentés comme des immigrants récemment arrivés, attachés à des valeurs et à des coutumes religieuses allant souvent à l'encontre des valeurs québécoises sécularisées. Alimentées par les controverses autour de l'islam et des musulmans survenues au cours des trois dernières décennies au Québec, les perceptions négatives à l'endroit de la communauté musulmane se reflètent dans le traitement de ces enjeux dans le curriculum prescrit. Les musulmans sont ainsi perçus comme une menace pour la laïcisation en cours de la société québécoise, largement interprétée comme un processus d'élimination du religieux de la sphère publique. Pour ne citer que quelques exemples de contenus didactiques, lorsque les valeurs religieuses et laïques sont mises en opposition, ce sont les signes ostentatoires islamiques qui sont cités en exemple ; les photographies de femmes musulmanes illustrant certains extraits montrent exclusivement des femmes voilées ; les extraits donnent rarement la parole aux musulmans pour défendre leurs points de vue religieux, coutumiers ou laïques.

C'est dans le volet « Culture religieuse » des manuels d'ECR, qui porte un regard privilégié sur le patrimoine religieux de la société québécoise, que la communauté musulmane du Québec occupe la place la plus importante. Ces manuels sont les seuls à présenter une histoire de l'immigration des communautés provenant de pays musulmans. Ils en font un traitement plutôt positif, voire neutre, des musulmans. On peut y constater également un choix varié de sujets traités: l'énumération de mosquées réputées sur l'Île de Montréal, la présentation de personnages musulmans pouvant servir de modèles à de jeunes musulmans québécois, l'énumération des interdits alimentaires de l'islam comparés à ceux d'autres religions, etc. Cependant, les occasions manquées de relier les musulmans du Québec au contexte culturel québécois sont nombreuses. De plus, la communauté musulmane, pourtant très variée culturellement, est décrite de manière monolithique. Elle est évoquée presque exclusivement à travers sa pratique religieuse et son organisation autour des édifices religieux (mosquée, école musulmane, boucherie ou épicerie halal…), ce qui l'enferme dans une image de repli communautaire.

Dans cette seconde partie réservée aux manuels d'histoire indiens, les références aux musulmans se font en termes généraux, ce qui contraste avec la spécificité du traitement réservé aux musulmans dans les manuels scolaires du Québec. Grâce à une analyse critique du discours qu'entretiennent en général les manuels d'histoire du secondaire, il s'agira pour nous de donner un bref aperçu de la place qu'occupent les musulmans en Inde pour enfin mieux les situer dans un contexte plus large.

Un problème majeur de l'analyse des manuels d'histoire de l'Inde est la diversité des manuels en usage. En outre, rappelons que l'éducation est à la fois le domaine des États fédérés, des territoires fédéraux de l'Union et du gouvernement central. Ainsi, bien que le Conseil national de recherche en éducation et formation (NCERT), créé en 1961, ait lancé la production de manuels scolaires laïques à usage national en mettant l'accent sur un passé et un patrimoine communs ainsi que sur les luttes collectives, leur acceptation demeure inégale à travers le pays.

Les musulmans ont joué un rôle prédominant dans le développement historique, culturel et économique de l'Inde depuis le VIIe siècle et forment aujourd'hui environ 14 % de la population totale. L'avènement de la modernité et du colonialisme en Inde coïncide avec la naissance du nationalisme et l'émergence de « minorités » (les autres). Qu'il s'agisse de la politique britannique de « diviser pour mieux régner », de leurs tentatives de dominer les musulmans ou de la renaissance hindoue et du mouvement de réforme sociale, l'émergence d'une identité politique musulmane à l'époque coloniale a bel et bien pris place. L'établissement d'une Inde composée d'une importante minorité musulmane et d'une majorité hindoue a forcé la formidable diversité des idées, des philosophies, des sectes et des divinités à se fondre sous une seule appellation: l'« hindouisme ». Alors que, durant le colonialisme, l'identification religieuse des Indiens n'avait jamais été bien établie jusque-là, les livres d'histoire séculière soulignent que, pendant le mouvement de l'Indépendance, tous les Indiens étaient unis contre « l'Autre », le colonisateur. Dans l'Inde indépendante, sur la scène politique, les groupes régionaux et les partis politiques doivent leur identité à leur appartenance ethnique et religieuse. Pourtant, dans les manuels d'histoire, on ne fait aucune mention de mouvements ethno-religieux. Conformément au cadre national des programmes, les manuels mettent l'accent sur un programme commun pour sauvegarder le nationalisme et les valeurs de laïcité, de socialisme et d'égalité.