

## **Between Tribes and Nation: The Definition of Yugoslav National Identity in Interwar Yugoslav Elementary School Curricula**

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At the time of the formation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SCS) in December 1918, the most important political actors, both within the Kingdom of Serbia and the former Austro-Hungarian lands, accepted the principle of national unity as a basic ideological fundament for the new state. This was clarified, for example, in the speech delivered by the representatives of the National Council of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, and in Prince-Regent Aleksandar's reply on the occasion of the official formation of the Kingdom of SCS on December 1, 1918. In both documents the principle of ethnographical unity of Serbs, Croat and Slovenes took a prominent place.<sup>1</sup> However, it soon became clear that concrete interpretations and definitions of Yugoslav national unity varied greatly among the political and cultural elites of the new state. A crucial point of disagreement was the relationship between the Yugoslav and other levels of collective identity available in the region, Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian identities in particular. In the discourse of the period, Serbs, Croats and Slovenes were generally called "tribes" of the Yugoslav nation, clarifying the multilayered character of collective identities in the Yugoslav lands at the time. On the one hand, the notion of an overarching Yugoslav collective identity was generally accepted, but on the other, Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian particularities remained viable mobilising factors in both the political and cultural realm, and were recognised as a distinct level between the national and the regional. Of course, other collective identities within the overarching Yugoslav unity, such as the Bosnian Muslim, Montenegrin or Macedonian ones, were "available" throughout the interwar period, and were increasingly "induced" by political and cultural actors at the regional level.<sup>2</sup> However, at the state level these collective identities were not recognised, and, as will be clarified, they were not taken into consideration in the nation-building policies of the Yugoslav authorities.

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<sup>1</sup> Both texts are included in Ferdo ČULINOVIĆ, *Jugoslavija između dva rata*, vol. 1. Zagreb 1961, 141–150.

<sup>2</sup> I use the terminology suggested by Rogers BRUBAKER, *Nationalism Reframed. Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*. Cambridge 1996, 13–22.

One of the crucial tasks of the first Yugoslav state was to strike a balance between different national identities in the country, making it an interesting case-study for scholars interested in the polymorphous and interactive character of national identities. Throughout the interwar period, ruling political elites formulated varying interpretations of the Yugoslav national idea. Elsewhere, I have employed the term *compromised Yugoslav unitarism* to describe the dominant national ideology of ruling political elites during the parliamentary period (1918–29), because Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian “tribal” individualities were tolerated within the nominally unitary Yugoslav nation.<sup>3</sup> This compromised Yugoslavism was manifested in the founding acts and state symbols of the new kingdom. Prince-Regent Aleksandar ended his speech on the occasion of the formation of the new state with “Long live the whole Serbo-Croato-Slovenian people”.<sup>4</sup> On 22 December 1918, the new government agreed that, in addition to the new blue-white-red state flag, the old Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian flags would remain in use.<sup>5</sup> On 6 September 1921, the Ministry of the Interior decided that the Yugoslav hymn would consist of one stanza of each the Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian hymns, “until a final decision [...] would be taken”.<sup>6</sup> The Vidovdan Constitution of 1921 set the name of the state to Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (art. 1), the official language was called “Serbo-Croato-Slovenian” (art. 3),<sup>7</sup> and the coat of arms was a two-headed eagle with on his chest the Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian coats of arms (art. 2).<sup>8</sup>

It was only after the installation of King Aleksandar’s Royal Dictatorship on 6 January 1929 that a more radical version of Yugoslav nationalism was adopted, generally termed *integral Yugoslavism*, which defined the Yugoslav nation as one and indivisible. Although the Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian “tribes” were recognised, they were considered only superficial and of a transitory nature. “Tribal” differences, it was argued, had in fact hindered national unity, and the dictatorship set itself the objective of assimilating them into a common nation.<sup>9</sup> The most obvious reflection of this ideological transformation was the Law on the Name and Division of the Kingdom in Administrative Regions of 3 October 1929. This law changed the name of the state to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and divided the country into nine administrative regions, called *banovinas* (singular

<sup>3</sup> Pieter TROCH, Yugoslavism Between the World Wars. Indecisive Nation-Building, *Nationalities Papers* 38 (2010), no. 2, 227–244, 229–232.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in ČULINOVIĆ, *Jugoslavija između dva rata*, 146.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, 175.

<sup>6</sup> Kosta V. ARANICKI/Stevan KARADŽIĆ (eds.), *Najnoviji jugoslovenski učiteljski zbornik svih zakona, uredba, pravilnika, pravila, rešenja, odluka i raspisa izdatih od oslobođenja do danas, koji se odnose na narodne škole i narodne učitelje-ice u celoj Jugoslaviji, a i danas su u važnosti*. Pančevo 1934, 159.

<sup>7</sup> In Serbo-Croatian the state language was termed *srpsko-hrvatsko-slovenački*.

<sup>8</sup> Dušan MRĐENOVIĆ, *Ustavi i vlade Kneževine Srbije, Kraljevine Srbije, Kraljevine SHS i Kraljevine Jugoslavije 1835–1941*. Beograd 1988, 209.

<sup>9</sup> TROCH, *Yugoslavism Between the World Wars*, 232–236.

*banovina*). The new name of the state reflected the full unity of state and nation, and the boundaries of the banovinas allegedly corresponded to economic and communicative factors, and, more importantly, cut across the old, “tribal”, historical boundaries, which had hindered Yugoslav national unity.<sup>10</sup> The dictatorial regime rejected any expression of what was termed “tribal separatism”. On 6 January 1929, King Aleksandar banned all associations with religious or “tribal” affiliations, and any form of “tribal discord or religious intolerance” in the press was censored.<sup>11</sup> On 27 September 1929, the new Law on Holidays decreed that only the state flag could be displayed on state holidays, and local authorities took firm action against any public institution which failed to do so.<sup>12</sup> Other issues, however, illustrate that the dictatorship, too, had to qualify its rejection of Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian collective identities and in fact continued to make use of these categories. The issue of the Yugoslav state hymn, for example, remained unresolved until the end of the interwar period. The 1931 Constitution, which introduced a pseudo-parliamentary system but perpetuated the fundamentals of the dictatorship, also retained the compromised designation of the state language as Serbo-Croato-Slovenian.<sup>13</sup>

After the assassination of King Aleksandar on 9 October 1934, a new government was formed under Milan Stojadinović. Although the government did not carry out any radical reorganisation of the political framework provided by the 1931 Constitution, it did introduce a gradual relaxation of the integral Yugoslavism of the previous period. The party program of the new governmental party, the Yugoslav Radical Union, stated that it would respect the three constituents of the nation, Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and their traditions, and argued that Yugoslav national unity could only be realised through the harmonious cooperation of the three “tribes”. The new government did not reject the Yugoslav national idea as an ideal for the future, but neither did it deny what was called the present reality of “tribal” differences.<sup>14</sup> Only after the establishment of a Croatian autonomous unit on 26 August 1939 was the idea of Yugoslav national unity abandoned by the ruling political elites.<sup>15</sup>

Although Yugoslavia’s ruling political elites accepted the Yugoslav national idea throughout most of the interwar period, the discourse on Yugoslav national identity remained vague and superficial, and left many issues concerning the specific relation between the Yugoslav national level and the sub-national level unclear. Of course, Yugoslav national unity was also discussed outside the political realm, in the cultural

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, 233.

<sup>11</sup> Ivana DOBRIVOJEVIĆ, Cenzura u doba šestojanuarskog režima Kralja Aleksandra, *Istorija 20. veka* 23 (2005), no. 2, 51–68.

<sup>12</sup> Christian A. NIELSEN, One State, One Nation, One King. The Dictatorship of King Aleksandar and His Yugoslav Project, 1929–1935. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University. New York 2002, 209–213.

<sup>13</sup> MRĐENOVIĆ, Ustavi i vlade, 249.

<sup>14</sup> TROCH, Yugoslavism Between the World Wars, 236–238.

<sup>15</sup> I will not treat this period of political and ideological transition in this article.

life of the new state, and it is there that we encounter more elaborate interpretations of Yugoslav national culture. As Andrew Wachtel has observed, different approaches toward Yugoslav national culture coexisted in the cultural life of the interwar period. First, he distinguishes the *model of cultural unification*, which aimed to create a uniform Yugoslav national culture and can be divided in three subcategories. In the *romantic model*, one existing culture (mostly Serbian) would set the standard for Yugoslav culture. Second, in the *multicultural model*, a new culture would be created that combined the three existing “tribal” cultures. Third, the *supranational model* sought to create a new culture which was not based on any of the existing “tribal” cultures. Beside the model of cultural unification, Wachtel also lists the *model of cultural cooperation*, which propagated the interaction of different Yugoslav cultures without the elimination of national differences, and the *model of mutual toleration*, which did not foresee any cultural interaction.<sup>16</sup>

Situated at the border of politics and culture, education occupied a crucial place in the elaboration of Yugoslav national identity in the interwar period. Therefore, an examination of the state’s educational policy can provide important insights into how Yugoslav nationhood was “institutionalized [...] as a political and cultural form” in the first Yugoslav state, and how it worked “as a practical category, as classificatory scheme, as cognitive frame”.<sup>17</sup> In this article I focus on the definition of Yugoslav national culture in elementary school curricula for the national subjects: language, history and geography. These three subjects were seen as crucial elements for the consolidation of Yugoslav national identity, in line with general assumptions about national identity. For each of these subjects, I will examine which facts were selected as constituent parts of Yugoslav national culture and in what way they were interpreted as such. These “facts” are, to use the term coined by Oliver Zimmer, *symbolic resources*, “political values/institutions, culture, history and geography” that “provide the symbolic raw material, as it were, which social actors can use as they define national identities in public discourse”.<sup>18</sup> I will specifically look at how curricula negotiated between the level of the Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian “tribe”, and that of the Yugoslav nation. For the structure of the argument I will refer to the categorisation of different approaches toward Yugoslav national culture proposed by Andrew Wachtel.

### Education and the Making of the Yugoslav Nation

Throughout the interwar period, it was agreed that education should play a crucial role in the consolidation of Yugoslav national identity. Article 16 of the 1921 Constitution stated: “All schools have to give moral education and develop civil consciousness

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<sup>16</sup> Andrew B. WACHTEL, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation. Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia*. Stanford/CA 1998, 81f.

<sup>17</sup> BRUBAKER, *Nationalism Reframed*, 16.

<sup>18</sup> Oliver ZIMMER, *Boundary Mechanisms and Symbolic Resources. Towards a Process-Orientated Approach to National Identity*, *Nations and Nationalism* 9 (2003), no. 2, 173–193, 179f.

in the spirit of national unity and religious tolerance.”<sup>19</sup> Documents and publications of various associations of educational experts, such as the Main Educational Board (Glavni prosvetni savet), an advisory organ to the Ministry of Education, the Association of Yugoslav Teachers (Udruženje jugoslovenskog učiteljstva) and the Association of Yugoslav Secondary School Teachers (Jugoslovensko profesorsko društvo), illustrate the idealism among educational professionals concerning the role of education in the consolidation of Yugoslav national unity.<sup>20</sup> At its first annual meeting, held on 17 and 18 July 1920, the Association of Yugoslav Teachers adopted a resolution proclaiming that Serbs, Croats and Slovenes were “three branches of a common tree”. After centuries of foreign oppression and exposure to other cultures a new period had begun in the history of the South Slavs, and it was up to the teachers to take the leading role in the consolidation of Yugoslav national unity.<sup>21</sup> Frequently, it was stated that soldiers and diplomats had created the Yugoslav state, but that teachers would create the Yugoslav nation:

“Military heroism and diplomatic wisdom have created our state, or simply territorial unity, but the formation of our national unity does not lie in its power. Army, diplomacy or police cannot realise national unification; neither can it be consolidated by state constitutions or proclamations. It can only be carried out through the good upbringing and education of the younger generations of our people in elementary schools, because only [that way] can we make regional patriotism, tribal feelings and separatist aspirations in certain regions disappear, so that instead of tribal feelings national consciousness and national sentiments will become dominant, and instead of regional patriotism general love toward the whole unified homeland, so that all will feel like sons of one nation, and not simply state citizens.”<sup>22</sup>

Similar voices were heard within the Association of Yugoslav Secondary School Teachers, which was established in October 1919. For example, Jaša Prodanović, the editor of “Glasnik profesorskog društva” (The Herald of the Association of Secondary School Teachers), stressed that politics could not guarantee national unity, because there were too many other factors involved, such as class, local and personal interests, and religion. It was the task of the intelligentsia, led by the teachers, to safeguard national unity against these other interests. This was not simply an idealistic dream, but the necessary prerequisite for the survival and progress of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Therefore the teachers “should teach the youth that above all personal, local, party, class and other

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<sup>19</sup> MRĐENOVIĆ, *Ustavi i vlade*. 211. All translations are mine, except when explicitly noted otherwise.

<sup>20</sup> It is significant that both teachers’ associations were formed immediately after the war on the private initiative of teachers and that both placed the ideal of national unification high on their agenda. It is also significant that some of the Croatian teachers did not join these organisations because they wanted to maintain the autonomy of their organisation.

<sup>21</sup> Dušan MILANOVIĆ, *Udruženje jugoslovenskog učiteljstva od 1920.–1930. godine*. Beograd 1930, 30–33.

<sup>22</sup> Jovan P. JOVANOVIĆ, *Značaj učiteljske organizacije u ujedinjenoj domovini Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca*, *Učitelj* 3 (1922), no. 1, 6–52, 7.

specific interests there is one higher, wider and more important interest, the general, national interest".<sup>23</sup>

It was clear that the realisation of this Yugoslav ideal through education required a radical reorganisation of the new state's educational system. When the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was formed in 1918 it inherited regions with dissimilar educational systems. Not only were there different education laws in Serbia, Montenegro and the former Austro-Hungarian lands, but there were also great differences within these pre-war states. In the former Austro-Hungarian regions, education was organised differently for Slovenia, Croatia-Slavonia (with Srem), Dalmatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Within pre-war Serbia itself there were obviously great differences between Serbia proper and the regions acquired after the Balkan Wars.<sup>24</sup> The differences between these regions were profound, and lay not only in the structure of the school system (types of schools, duration of compulsory education), but also in the quality of education (density of the school network, material used in schools, curricula).

Immediately after the war several commissions were established with the task of formulating new education laws for the entire kingdom. However, it was not until the establishment of the Royal Dictatorship in 1929 that such laws were legalised. In fact, the only earlier legal unification occurred in 1920, not coincidentally under the ministry of Svetozar Pribičević, when the Serbian education laws were expanded to Montenegro (14 May 1920) and Baranja, Bačka and the Banat (20 August 1920).<sup>25</sup> Although the complexity of the situation and the wide-ranging differences between the regions in the kingdom should be taken into consideration when evaluating the educational policy of the 1920s, many observers have rightfully argued that it was a lack of political stability and maturity that derailed the unification of the educational system. During the parliamentary period there were ten different ministers of education, which disrupted the continuity both of the personnel of the ministry and of its policies.<sup>26</sup> Ljubodrag Dimić has noted that before the parliamentary year 1927–28, no minister of education had even given a general presentation of his policy. Only in the late 1920s, under the ministries of Kosta Kumanudi and Milan Grol, were the first coherent educational programs introduced, but these too were never concretised because of political instability.<sup>27</sup> Nearly every year "Prosvetni glasnik" (Educational Herald), the official organ of the Ministry of Education, or "Učitelj" (Teacher) and "Glasnik profesorskog društva", the organs of the associations of Yugoslav elementary and secondary school teachers, respectively, announced that a new commission had

<sup>23</sup> Jaša PRODANOVIĆ, Pred novim zadacima, *Glasnik profesorskog društva* 1 (1921), no. 1, 7–14, 9.

<sup>24</sup> Martin MAYER, *Elementarbildung in Jugoslawien (1918–1941). Ein Beitrag zur gesellschaftlichen Modernisierung?* München 1995 (Südosteuropäische Arbeiten, 96), 39–55.

<sup>25</sup> Vladeta TEŠIĆ, *Sto godina prosvetnog saveta Srbije 1880–1980*. Beograd 1980, 88f.

<sup>26</sup> Ljubodrag DIMIĆ, *Kulturna politika u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji 1918–1941*, vol. 1. Beograd 1996, 215f.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, 216.

been appointed to finally formulate a legislative proposal to reform the educational system. As argued by Danilo Milanović in a jubilee book published by the Association of Yugoslav Teachers on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of its foundation, “the practice was that every new minister of education appointed a new commission for the correction of the old project and to submit his own”.<sup>28</sup> Often, the proposals were “identical in [their] general decrees and only different in some details or special principles”.<sup>29</sup> In this context, no comprehensive Yugoslav nation-building program could be introduced in education.

It was not until the establishment of the Royal Dictatorship that education was reorganised along the lines of a general program. On 12 March 1929 Minister of Education Božidar Maksimović presented the council of ministers with an educational program which heavily focused on Yugoslav national unification. As Maksimović said: “It is not only the objective of elementary schools to spread literacy, but also, *and even more*, to educate nationally.” Similar objectives were set for teacher-training and secondary schools. The minister also made it clear that he would not tolerate any challenges to the authority of the ministry, let alone criticism. Teachers were state officials and should thus represent the official state ideology. If not, the state should immediately dispense with them.<sup>30</sup> This threat was repeated by a representative of the ministry, Dragoslav Đorđević, at a meeting of the Association of Yugoslav Teachers on 21 and 22 August 1930. Đorđević stated that it was the primary task of the teachers to be “warriors for the creation of the purest Yugoslav nationalism”, and added that whoever would refuse to do so would be dismissed.<sup>31</sup> These two elements, namely the dominant position of integral Yugoslav nationalism and the authoritarian position of the Ministry of Education, formed the foundation of the dictatorship’s educational policy. Unlike in the previous period, the ministry succeeded in quickly legalising a whole range of education laws and by the end of 1931 the entire educational system had been legally reorganised. In each of these laws Yugoslav nation-building was mentioned as one of the, if not *the* most important objective for the type of school in question. In December 1933, the Ministry of Education published methodological instructions for all public schools in the kingdom.<sup>32</sup> No other document gives such a detailed overview of the enormous

<sup>28</sup> MILANOVIĆ, Udruženje jugoslovenskog učiteljstva, 72.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem, 53.

<sup>30</sup> The program is reproduced in Ljubodrag ĐIMIĆ/Nikola ŽUTIĆ/Borivoje ISAILOVIĆ (eds.), *Zapisnici sa sednica ministarskog saveta Kraljevina Jugoslavija 1929–1931*. Beograd 2002, 34–37, 35 (emphasis P.T.).

<sup>31</sup> Vuj. PETKOVIĆ, Skupština jugoslovenskog učiteljskog udruženja, *Učitelj* 11 (1930), no. 1, 50–61, 56.

<sup>32</sup> Public schools (*narodne škole*) is the overarching name for elementary schools (*osnovne škole*) and higher public schools (*više narodne škole*). Elementary schools were compulsory for all Yugoslav children and lasted four years. Higher public schools also lasted four years, and were compulsory for pupils who would not attend any form of secondary education after elementary school. In theory, every Yugoslav citizen should have completed at least the eight years of public school.

tasks ascribed to elementary education during the dictatorship. It declared that the state maintained public schools for its self-preservation, and that, consequently, these schools should reflect the spirit of the state ideology:

“The public school is an important weapon for the state’s cultural community, because it systematically prepares and educates the whole national youth in the spirit of the state’s national aspirations.”

The methodological guidelines determined that it was the task of public schools to educate pupils on the basis of the following principles: national and state unity, religious tolerance, morality and finally loyalty toward state, nation and society. Especially important for the consolidation of national consciousness were the national subjects: language, history and geography.<sup>33</sup> It should be noted that in the 1933 curriculum physical education was mentioned as a fourth crucial subject for the national education of the pupils. Physical health and strength were considered crucial for the progress of the nation and even its survival in the perpetual battle of nations. The curriculum prescribed that gymnastics should be practiced according to the principles of the “Sokol” (literally Falcon), a gymnastics movement with a long tradition in the Slavic world. In December 1929, the dictatorial regime had disbanded all existing Sokol organisations in the kingdom, and replaced them with a unified Sokol of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.<sup>34</sup> The organisation was heavily promoted by the state authorities, amongst others in schools, and was intended to become a central pillar of Yugoslav national unity. However, in the scope of the present article, this element of Yugoslav nation-building is less relevant.

### Defining Yugoslav National Identity in Curricula

In what follows I will examine how Yugoslav national culture was defined in elementary school curricula for language, history and geography. During the interwar period, four different curricula were approved by the Ministry of Education. Three of these were issued in the 1920s, but differences between these curricula were in fact quite minimal. A first curriculum for elementary schools was prescribed by Minister

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<sup>33</sup> Metodiska uputstva za sve narodne škole u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji. Beograd 1933, 1. The methodological guidelines can be found in the Archive of Yugoslavia (AJ) in Belgrade, under 66-1281-1527. The numeration for archival documents is given in the conventional order: the first number refers to the fond, the second to the fascicle and the third to the archival unit. Fond 66 is the fond of the Ministry of Education.

<sup>34</sup> Before the First World War, Serbs, Croats and Slovenes each had established their own Sokol organisation. After the war, in 1919, the three Sokol organisations merged into a Yugoslav Sokol Union. However, by 1922 a significant number of the Croatian Sokol groups re-established a separate Croatian Sokol, which led to many conflicts between the Yugoslav and the Croatian Sokol. Also during the 1920s some local Serbian Sokol groups were re-established. See Ante BROZOVIĆ, Sokolski zbornik. Beograd 1934, 221-237.

Pribičević on 27 June 1925 (see Table 1).<sup>35</sup> A year later, on 10 August 1926, Minister Miloš Trifunović introduced some minor revisions to the curriculum, and on 23 August 1926, a detailed program for all four years was added (see Table 2).<sup>36</sup>

However, this program was heavily criticised. In a letter to the Ministry of Education on 20 November 1926, the Association of Yugoslav Teachers complained that the curriculum was unclear and superficial. Moreover, it was intolerable that the curriculum was formulated without first consulting the Main Educational Board, or the Association itself, and it was absurd to write out a curriculum if there was still no law concerning elementary education. Consequently, the Ministry of Education withdrew the curriculum on 29 November 1926 and sent it to the Main Educational Board for revision.<sup>37</sup> On 3 October 1927, a new temporary curriculum was published on the basis of the proposal made by the Board.<sup>38</sup> This situation perfectly illustrates the complete lack of continuity in the state's educational policy. Three years in a row a new curriculum was prescribed, whereas the actual differences between these programs were minimal. On 17 July 1933, the Ministry of Education finally published a new, definitive curriculum for elementary schools (see Table 3).<sup>39</sup>

In general, I will treat these curricula as a group, but when necessary I will identify differences, especially between the curricula of the parliamentary period and that of the dictatorship. Where possible, I will refer to complementary decrees or decisions made by the Ministry of Education to clarify my points.

### **The Controversial Issue of the Yugoslav Language**

Language was considered the most important subject in elementary education. All curricula under scrutiny stressed that the importance of the subject lay not only in teaching children to read and write, but also in developing their national consciousness. However, the exact interpretation of the Serbo-Croato-Slovenian language, as the official state language was labeled in the 1921 and 1931 constitutions, remained controversial. A first major point of discussion concerned the relation between Serbo-Croatian and Slovenian. It is beyond the scope of this article to summarise the entire

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<sup>35</sup> AJ 66-254-495: Nastavni plan za I, II, III i IV razr. i nastavni program za I i II razr. sviju osnovnih škola u Kraljevini Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca. Beograd 1925. The tables give the amount of hours per week per subject for each school year. 2/2 refers to two half hours per week.

<sup>36</sup> AJ 66-1281-1527: Nastavni plan za I, II, III i IV razred sviju osnovnih škola u Kraljevini Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca. Beograd 1926.

<sup>37</sup> The letters can be found in AJ 66-2053-2041.

<sup>38</sup> AJ 66-254-495: Privremeni nastavni program za I, II, III i IV razred osnovne škole u Kraljevini Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca. Beograd 1927. The number of hours per subject remained unchanged from the 1926 curriculum.

<sup>39</sup> Nastavni plan i program za osnovne škole u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji, in: ARANICKI/KARADŽIĆ (eds.), Najnoviji jugoslovenski učiteljski zbornik, 54-69.

National Identity in Interwar Yugoslav Elementary School Curricula

Table 1. Curriculum for elementary schools, 27 June 1925.

<i>Subject</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>III</i>	<i>IV</i>	<i>Total</i>
Religion and morality	2	2	2	2	8
Serbo-Croatian, Slovenian	8	8	7	7	30
Basic real education	2	4	-	-	6
Geography	-	-	2	2	4
History of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes	-	-	2	3	5
Calculation and Geometry	4	4	4	4	16
Nature study	-	-	3	3	6
Drawing	1	1	1	1	4
Calligraphy	1	1	1	1	4
Handiwork for boys/girls	2	2	2	2	8
Singing	2/2	2/2	2/2	2/2	4
Gymnastics	2/2	2/2	2/2	2/2	4
Total	22	24	26	27	99

Table 2. Curriculum for elementary schools, 23 August 1926.

<i>Subject</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>III</i>	<i>IV</i>	<i>Total</i>
Religion and morality	2	2	2	2	8
Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian	7	7	7	7	28
Basic real education	3	4	-	-	7
Geography	-	-	2	2	4
History of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes	-	-	2	3	5
Calculation and Geometry	4	4	4	4	16
Nature study	-	-	3	3	6
Drawing	1	1	1	1	4
Calligraphy	1	1	1	1	4
Handiwork for boys/girls	2	2	2	2	8
Singing	2/2	2/2	2/2	2/2	4
Gymnastics	2/2	2/2	2/2	2/2	4
Total	22	23	26	27	98

discussion, but a reference to some representative standpoints is instructive.<sup>40</sup> In June 1922 the progressive, Yugoslav-orientated, Zagreb-based magazine “Nova Evropa” (The New Europe) published an article in which the Slovenian linguist Matija Murko, at the time working in Prague, argued against the tendency to reduce the Slovenian language to a mere dialect of Serbo-Croatian. Although the Slovenian vernacular undoubtedly was very similar to spoken Croatian, and could have been integrated into a common

<sup>40</sup> For more details on the Yugoslav language issue see ĐIMIĆ, *Kulturna politika*, vol. 3, 372–410; and WACHTEL, *Making a Nation*, 87–90.

Table 3. Curriculum for elementary schools, 17 June 1933.

<i>Subject</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>III</i>	<i>IV</i>	<i>Total</i>
Religion and morality	1	1	2	2	6
National language (Serbo-Croato-Slovenian)	10	9	6	5	30
Geography	-	-	2	3	5
History	-	-	1	3	4
Nature study and hygiene	-	-	3	3	6
Calculation with geometry	5	5	4	4	18
Drawing	-	1	1	1	3
Housekeeping and handiwork	-	-	3	3	6
Singing	2/2	2/2	1	1	4
Sokol-gymnastics	4/2	4/2	2	1	7
Calligraphy	-	1	1	1	3
Total	19	20	26	27	92

South Slav literary language, historical circumstances produced a different situation. Murko clearly regretted this, but in his opinion it would be wrong to deny the historical development of the Slovenian language.

“Thus, we have to take into account two literary languages in Yugoslavia, but we have to do everything in our power to reduce and alleviate this bad evolution. As in many questions, we should seek cure and comfort in Yugoslavism. If we are one state and one nation [...] we have to love equally, or at least respect, everything which is ours, everything which is beautiful and good.”

Murko suggested that Slovenian pupils should learn the Serbo-Croatian written language, and that Serbo-Croatian pupils should also learn the Slovenian written language.<sup>41</sup> In the same number, the editor of “Nova Evropa”, Milan Čurčin, clarified that Murko’s article did not correspond to the viewpoint of “Nova Evropa”. Čurčin argued that linguistic unity was the only objective criterion for national unity. Thus, if the Yugoslavs formed one nation, as they obviously did for Čurčin, they must share one written language. Even though Čurčin accepted that the Slovenian written language would be used for the time being, in the future Slovenian and Serbo-Croatian would have to merge into one South Slav written language. The nature of this common language remained undefined. It could be the Serbo-Croatian written language, or even, theoretically, the Slovenian written language, or, and this was most likely for Čurčin, the product of the gradual crystallisation of both languages into one.<sup>42</sup>

After the establishment of the dictatorship, demands for the introduction of a uniform Yugoslav written language became more frequent and insistent. In the magazine “Narodna odbrana” (National Defence), for example, Petar Bulat, an ethnologist work-

<sup>41</sup> Matija MURKO, Slovenački književni jezik, *Nova Evropa* 5 (1922), no. 5, 132–140, 138.

<sup>42</sup> M. Č. [Milan ČURČIN], Slovenačko pitanje, *Nova Evropa* 5 (1922), no. 5, 129–132.

ing at the Philosophical Faculty in Skopje, complained that no progress had been made in the formation of a single written language for the Yugoslavs since the times of Vuk Karadžić and Ljudevit Gaj.<sup>43</sup> In fact, according to Bulat, three written languages were used in Yugoslavia: the Slovenian dialect, which had developed into a separate written language (kajkavian-ekavian, Latin alphabet), Croatian (štokavian-ijekavian, Latin alphabet), and Serbian (štokavian-ekavian, Cyrillic alphabet). With the realisation of Yugoslav political unity, Bulat argued, it was absolutely necessary to create a common Yugoslav written language to finally achieve full national unity. Bulat proposed that Serbs and Croats would choose one dialect and one alphabet, either ijekavian and Cyrillic, or ekavian and Latin. For the Slovenian written dialect there was no other option but its “quiet and gradual liquidation”.<sup>44</sup> On 10 January 1930, the newspaper “Jugoslovenski dnevnik” (Yugoslav Daily) reported that the government was completing a law that prescribed a common alphabet and written language for Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.<sup>45</sup> Although authorities never enacted such a law, there was a general fear among Slovenian intellectuals that the authorities wished to do so. In the short-lived integral Yugoslav magazine *Jugosloven* (The Yugoslav), Ivan Lah argued, just as Murko had a decade earlier, that linguistic unity could not be realised by force:<sup>46</sup>

“Since it is not possible to eliminate the Cyrillic alphabet immediately (the question is if this would be honourable for our Yugoslav nationalism?), since we cannot force ijekavians to write ekavian (the question is if this is necessary in the first place!), since we cannot eliminate the Slovenian language (because this would cause great dissatisfaction), and since we thus are incapable of reforming and all at once eliminating the differences that have originated on our Yugoslav territory in the course of cultural development (the question is if it is necessary to eliminate them!), it is necessary to first reform ourselves and to overcome these differences within ourselves, which means that we first have to overcome all “narrow-mindedness”, commotion, obsolete restrictedness and provincialism and to bring our diversified Yugoslav world closer together, regardless of the fact that it is expressed in this or that alphabet, in this or that dialect.”

Lah suggested that all three “tribes” should become familiar with the traditions of the other “tribes”, and should respect their differences. No “tribe” should be asked to

<sup>43</sup> Narodna odbrana was initially founded by Serbian intellectuals in Belgrade as a reaction against the Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908. It was re-established in 1926 as an organisation of predominantly Serbian intellectuals and aimed to contribute to the cultural revival of the Yugoslav nation and to protect the unity the Yugoslav state and nation. It had a conservative and Serb-centred orientation. ĐIMIĆ, *Kulturna politika*, vol. 1, 465–506.

<sup>44</sup> Petar BULAT, Pitanje jugoslovenskog književnog jezika i Slovenci, *Narodna odbrana* 7 (1932), no. 48, 754–756, 755.

<sup>45</sup> Za jedan književni jezik i azbuku, *Jugoslovenski dnevnik*, 10.1.1930, 1. The editor of this newspaper, Fedor Nikić, was an assistant at the Ministry of Education.

<sup>46</sup> Lah wrote his article in response to a book by the integral Yugoslav ideologist Vladimir Dvorniković, who had argued that the Yugoslavs should adopt one language, one orthography and one alphabet to foster Yugoslav cultural progress. Vladimir DVORNIKOVIĆ, *Naša kulturna orijentacija u današnjoj Evropi*. Zagreb 1931, 125.

sacrifice essential aspects of its culture, rather each “tribe” should become familiar with the cultural products of all parts of the nation in their original form.<sup>47</sup>

To what extent was the discourse on Serbo-Croato-Slovenian linguistic unity concretised in language education? Although their ideas about the desired degree of linguistic unification of the South Slavs diverged, as clarified in the different terms used to refer to Serbo-Croatian and Slovenian, educational experts agreed that a first, realistic step toward Yugoslav unity would be for all pupils to become familiar with different variants of the state language. In its basic program of 1922 the Association of Yugoslav Teachers had demanded that all pupils should learn to use both the Cyrillic and Latin alphabets, and to understand “all *dialects* of the state language”.<sup>48</sup> The Slovenian delegates in a commission for the formulation of a general educational program established under the ministry of Kumanudi in December 1927 argued that elementary education in Slovenia should be presented in the Slovenian *language*. Slovenian pupils should learn Serbo-Croatian, but, and this reflected the fear of many Slovenian intellectuals, the teaching of Serbo-Croatian should remain moderate. It was considered sufficient if Slovenian pupils became familiarised with Serbo-Croatian and learned Cyrillic. Similarly, Serbo-Croatian pupils should become familiar with Slovenian.<sup>49</sup>

In the curricula, a plain distinction was made between Serbo-Croatian and Slovenian. In Slovenia pupils learned the Slovenian language, and in other regions the pupils learned Serbo-Croatian. Instead of the model of cultural unification – the uniform written language demanded by some Yugoslav ideologists – the language curricula for Slovenian pupils departed from the model of cultural cooperation, as suggested by educational experts. All curricula prescribed that in Slovenia pupils would have one hour of Serbo-Croatian in the third year, and two hours in the fourth year. The 1933 curriculum also stated that one-fourth of the texts in Slovenian schoolbooks should be in Serbo-Croatian. In the converse situation, however, it is more accurate to speak of a model of cultural toleration. None of the curricula introduced a structural study of the Slovenian language for Serbo-Croatian pupils. At most, as was indicated in the 1927 curriculum, pupils of the Serbian or Croatian part of the nation read some simple texts in the Slovenian “dialect”.<sup>50</sup> In practice, Slovenian was recognised as a separate language, but it was clearly not equal to Serbo-Croatian.

The linguistic unity of Serbo-Croatian was generally accepted in the period. The most important action to standardise Serbo-Croatian during the interwar period was the introduction of a uniform orthography in 1929. The first meeting of the Commission

<sup>47</sup> Ivan LAH, Naše kulturno jedinstvo, *Jugosloven* 1 (1932), no. 5, 261–265, 262f.

<sup>48</sup> JOVANOVIĆ, Značaj učiteljske organizacije, 34 (emphasis P.T.).

<sup>49</sup> Rezolucije komisije za izradu državnog prosvetnog programa, *Prosvetni glasnik* 44 (1928), 166. *Prosvetni glasnik* was the official organ of the Ministry of Education. It was published monthly and contained all the decisions made by the ministry.

<sup>50</sup> The other curricula under scrutiny did not mention the study of Slovenian in Serbo-Croatian schools.

for the unification of Serbo-Croatian orthography and terminology was held in the presence of Minister of Education Svetozar Pribićević on 1 July 1925. The commission consisted of the country's greatest authorities in the field of linguistics: Tomo Maretić, Ljubomir Stojanović, Milan Rešetar (replaced by Stjepan Ivšić), Aleksandar Belić and Dragutin Boranić.<sup>51</sup> After this first meeting, the work was apparently stopped and only in the parliamentary year 1927–28 did the commission resume its work.<sup>52</sup> Finally, the guidelines were ratified on 21 August 1929. In the accompanying decree Minister of Education Božidar Maksimović explained that, although Serbo-Croatian orthography was based on Vuk Karadžić's reforms, separate evolutions in different regions had led to variations in its concrete use. This led to great difficulties in education, and in many cases teachers themselves did not know which orthography to use. The new guidelines were designed to bring an end to this chaos and were to be used in all schools and in all textbooks and other teaching materials.<sup>53</sup>

An issue which inspired much discussion was the fact that the Serbo-Croatian written language was written in two alphabets, Cyrillic and Latin, and two dialects, ekavian and ijekavian. Of course, this did not fit smoothly with the nationalist ideal of a uniform national language. At its first meeting, the Commission for the Unification of Serbo-Croatian had argued that the use of one alphabet and one dialect would be ideal. In practice, however, the introduction of one alphabet and one dialect for the written language was deemed not (yet) realistic because all variants had such a long tradition among the population that it would be impossible to impose one variant over the other.<sup>54</sup> The language curricula followed the conclusions of the commission. Thus, with regard to the use of alphabets and dialects of the Serbo-Croatian literary language the model of cultural cooperation was adopted, as the curricula guaranteed that pupils would learn both the Latin and the Cyrillic alphabets and read texts in both literary dialects. The curriculum of 1925 stipulated that pupils would begin to read a second alphabet in the second year, in 1926 there was suddenly no trace of two alphabets in the curriculum, but again in 1927 a second alphabet was to be introduced in the third year. The 1933 curriculum prescribed the teaching of a second alphabet from the second year forward. The curricula did not treat the use of ekavian or ijekavian, and thus

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<sup>51</sup> Fran Ramovš and Stjepan Kuljbakin also participated, as experts on Slovenian and Slavic linguistics, respectively. They cooperated with the commission to set a common scientific terminology, in accordance with Slovenian and other Slavic terminologies. AJ 66-123-398: unpublished report by Aleksandar BELIĆ, Povodom naredbe g. Ministra prosvete o ujednačenju pravopisa u srednjoj školi. 1929.

<sup>52</sup> AJ 66-123-398: letter from Aleksandar Belić, the president of the commission, to the Ministry of Education, dated 22.10.1928.

<sup>53</sup> AJ 66–319–537: Pravopisno uputstvo za sve osnovne, srednje i stručne škole u Kraljevini SHS. Beograd 1929, S. 1.

<sup>54</sup> AJ 66–319–537: Izveštaj Gospodinu Ministru prosvete o radu komisije za izjednačenje srpskohrvatskog pravopisa, 1925.

a status quo was accepted, as was explicitly stated in the orthographic guidelines.<sup>55</sup> Pupils would encounter texts in both dialects in their textbooks.

Finally, although these curricula for elementary education did not provide detailed lists of what the pupils should read, they did clarify that the texts treated should strengthen the pupils' national consciousness. The 1933 methodological guidelines prescribed that in the second and third year especially children's songs and stories and folk songs should be used. In the third year the pupils should also read longer texts, especially about national literature, history or geography. In the fourth year the textbook should have a culturally encyclopaedic character, with texts from national and folk literature, travel stories, historical stories, and texts about the organisation of the state. By the end of elementary education the pupils should know a large number of the best poems of Yugoslav national literature by heart, but no authors were specified.<sup>56</sup>

In line with the state ideology the curricula did not explicitly recognise any other variants of the state language beside Serbo-Croatian and Slovenian. Macedonia was considered a purely Serbian region and was called Southern Serbia. In Yugoslavia, this opinion was widely accepted outside Macedonia itself, as is clarified, for example, in the October 1924 issue of "Nova Evropa", which contained several articles which "proved" the Serbian character of Southern Serbia/Macedonia. Consequently, the Macedonian language was seen as a local dialect of Serbian/Serbo-Croatian. In the above-mentioned issue of "Nova Evropa", B. Đerić argued that the Southern Serbian dialects included elements of both Serbian and Bulgarian, but that the Serbian characteristics were more numerous, and that Macedonian dialects thus irrefutably belonged to the Serbian language.<sup>57</sup> However, in the curricula concessions were made which allowed the use of distinct dialects, Macedonian among them. The 1926 and 1927 curricula stated that language education should first be given in the local dialect and that pupils should only gradually learn the written language. In the 1933 methodological guidelines this principle was termed *zavičajnost*, which meant that education should begin with what the pupils knew and then expand their knowledge gradually to the national level, in this case from their local dialect to the standard written language.<sup>58</sup>

To conclude, although Wachtel's model of cultural unification, which would establish a uniform Yugoslav written language, was considered the ideal situation by most Yugoslav national ideologues, it was not implemented in language education curricula.

<sup>55</sup> AJ 66-319-537: Pravopisno uputstvo za sve osnovne, S. 9.

<sup>56</sup> AJ 66-1281-1527: Metodska uputstva za sve narodne škole, S. 13-22.

<sup>57</sup> B. ĐERIĆ, Pregled najglavnijih osobina dijalekata u Južnoj Srbiji, *Nova Evropa* 10 (1924), no. 11, 336-340. For more information on the failed attempts at Yugoslav integration in Macedonia in the interwar period, and the opposition against attempts to introduce Serbo-Croatian, see Nada Boškovića, *Das jugoslawische Makedonien 1918-1941*. Wien, Köln, Weimar 2009, 332-339.

<sup>58</sup> AJ 66-1281-1527: Metodska uputstva za sve narodne škole, S. 3f. It is difficult to find an adequate English translation for *zavičajnost*. *Zavičaj* means hometown, home region or homeland, so we could translate *zavičajnost* as "home-regionness".

Instead, the status of Slovenian as a separate language was accepted, as was the status quo for the use of different alphabets and dialects of Serbo-Croatian. In theory, pupils should become familiarised with all other variants and alphabets of the written language, which would theoretically lead to mutual understanding and rapprochement. In practice, however, this demand for cultural cooperation was administered unevenly. Whereas the Slovenes were required to learn Serbo-Croatian beginning in the third year of elementary education; Serbo-Croatian-speaking pupils were only familiarised with other variants and alphabets of Serbo-Croatian. With regard to Slovenian, they read some easier Slovenian texts in their readers, but this was not accompanied by a structured study of the Slovenian language.

### **Merging “Tribal” Histories**

Although history was only taught in the last two years of elementary school, it was considered extremely useful for the development of national consciousness. In any case, it was the subject where Yugoslav national ideology was most obviously implemented in the curricula. The history of the Yugoslavs was subdivided in four longer periods: the period before the arrival of the South Slavs in the Balkans, the era of independent medieval states, the period of foreign oppression under the Ottomans, Hungarians and Habsburgs, and finally the national revival and unification in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For each of these periods important events and figures from the histories of the three accepted “tribes” were selected and interpreted as parallel events within a common Yugoslav national history. Further, curricula highlighted figures or events which cut across the boundaries of “tribal” histories, and were interpreted as evidence of Yugoslav national cooperation and consciousness.

The period before the arrival of the South Slavs in the Balkans was briefly mentioned in order to stress the primordial state of South Slav national coexistence in their original homeland. It was also emphasised that Serbs, Croats and Slovenes jointly migrated to the Balkans, as undifferentiated members of one nation. Further, the curricula paid particular attention to the formation of South Slav medieval states in the Balkans. It was stressed that all of these medieval states should be seen as attempts to unite the South Slavs in one strong South Slav state, an ideal which was never realised because of foreign enmity and internal division. The first of the medieval states which was included in the curricula was the “first Slavic state” of King Samo of the seventh century, which included present-day Slovenian regions. The 1933 curriculum referred to the field of Gospa Sveta (Gospodsvetsko polje / Zollfeld), the centre of the Principality of Carantania, which emerged after the disintegration of Samo’s tribal union and was considered the first Slovenian state and the Slovenian equivalent to the Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian medieval states. These Croatian, Bosnian and Serbian medieval kingdoms, for their parts, were referred to as “the first Yugoslav kingdoms”. In the 1933 curriculum

a distinct place was given to the prime of the Croatian kingdom under King Tomislav in the tenth century, for Serbia under Emperor Dušan in the fourteenth century, and for Bosnia under fourteenth-century King Tvrtko.<sup>59</sup> These medieval kingdoms were portrayed as parallel attempts to unite and liberate the South Slavs. In this manner, they form an interesting variation to the *topos* of the “golden age” in nationalist histories. Although none of these cases succeeded, they were glorified as parallel attempts to unite all South Slavs, and thus as predecessors of the Yugoslav kingdom.

This attempt to incorporate the legacy of the medieval South Slav states was also prevalent in the commemoration policy of the new state. In 1925 the millennial anniversary of the crowning of Tomislav as Croatian King was commemorated. On 15 and 16 August 1925, King Aleksandar attended a commemoration in Zagreb organised by the Croatian Sokol. On this occasion Stjepan Radić greeted him with a poem in which he linked Aleksandar to Tomislav, and spoke of the harmony of Croats, Serbs and Slovenes.<sup>60</sup> Also, the village of Duvno in Eastern Herzegovina, close to the site where Tomislav was crowned, was renamed Tomislavgrad. Nor was it a coincidence that Aleksandar's second son, who was born in 1928, was named Tomislav.

For the medieval period, the curricula also paid great attention to figures or events that illustrated concrete cooperation among the South Slav “tribes”. For example, Duke Ljudevit Posavski of Pannonian Croatia, the leader of a rebellion against the Franks at the beginning of the ninth century, in which Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian tribes cooperated, was portrayed as the first ruler of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Similarly, King Tvrtko was continuously celebrated as the first king of the Serbs and Croats, because his Kingdom included both Serbian and Croatian lands. Such historical resources, which cut across the boundaries of “tribal” histories, were given a prominent place in the Yugoslav historical narrative, as historical evidence of Yugoslav national consciousness.

The golden age in Yugoslav history was followed by a long period of oppression and suffering. However, precisely in this period of suffering, the internal cohesion of the Yugoslav nation was strengthened through battles against common enemies, the Ottomans in particular. First, the curricula traced the decline of the medieval South Slav states. The 1926 and 1927 curricula mentioned King Petar Svačić and Prince Lazar, who both gave their lives for the Yugoslav nation, the former as ruler of the Croatian Kingdom against the Hungarians, the latter as ruler of (a part of) the Serbian Empire against the Ottomans. For both “tribes” curricula also referred to a lost battle against the Ottomans, for the Croats at Krbava field, and for the Serbs at Kosovo.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, the curricula attempted to represent the battle of Kosovo as a common

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<sup>59</sup> It is striking that Tomislav was not even mentioned in the curricula for 1926 and 1927.

<sup>60</sup> Zlatko MATIJEVIĆ, Ministar Pavle Radić na “Napretkovoj” proslavi tisućogodišnjice hrvatskog kraljevstva u Sarajevu 1925. godine, *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 36 (2004), no. 3, 1127–1149.

<sup>61</sup> In the 1933 curriculum, Petar Svačić and the battle at Krbava field were no longer mentioned. The figure of Nikola Šubić Zrinski, who will be discussed later, represented an additional Croatian act of resistance against the Ottomans.

Yugoslav battle. The 1927 curriculum explicitly mentioned that Serbs fought side by side with Croats and Slovenes, whereas the 1933 curriculum spoke of the battle of the Yugoslavs against the Turks.

Vidovdan, the twenty-eighth of June and the day the battle of Kosovo took place, was established as the festive last day of the school year, a practice taken over from the Kingdom of Serbia.<sup>62</sup> On 13 May 1927, the ministry circulated a pamphlet requiring that on Vidovdan all schools, in cooperation with other educational institutions in the area, should organise popular lectures, concerts, festivities and Sokol-demonstrations to illustrate the important role played by schools in the national and cultural development of the people. Half of the profit of the day was to be sent to the National Fund for Popular Education (for the publication of teaching material), and the other half could be used for local activities.<sup>63</sup> Although the authorities attempted to detach Vidovdan from its narrow Serbian character, it was clear that the holiday remained closely associated with Serbian historical memory, even in the prescriptions of the ministry itself.<sup>64</sup> On 18 June 1928, for example, the Ministry of Education commissioned all elementary schools to hold lectures on the importance of the Orthodox church of Samodreža in Kosovo, where Prince Lazar was blessed just before the battle of Kosovo. On the same occasion the teachers were asked to publicise the organisation that was founded to restore the church.<sup>65</sup> Certainly, such an interpretation of Vidovdan was not likely to mobilise non-Serbian Orthodox population groups.

For all Yugoslav “tribes” the curricula also selected events or figures that were interpreted – not always convincingly – as manifestations of the Yugoslav national resistance against foreign political and cultural oppression. For Slovenian history the curriculum mentioned the counts of Celje, an important aristocratic family in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries who were vassals of the Habsburgs, but at times challenged their authority. The 1933 curriculum explicitly stressed their bonds with Serbs and Croats, a likely reference to the fact that the house of Celje owned lands in Croatia and Slavonia and had dynastic bonds with prominent South Slav families. Also, Primož Trubar was mentioned, in particular his efforts to defend the Slovenian language against German cultural oppression. For Croatia, the curriculum mentioned the peasant rebellion of Matija Gubec and its following in Slovenia, the figure of Nikola Šubić Zrinski, who had given his life for the nation while fighting the Ottomans in Siget, and the conspiracy of

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<sup>62</sup> For the establishment of Vidovdan as a national holiday at the end of the nineteenth century, see Wolfgang HÖPKEN, *Zwischen nationaler Sinnstiftung, Jugoslawismus und “Erinnerungschaos”*, *Österreichische Osthefte* 47 (2005), 345–391, 352f.

<sup>63</sup> Vidov-dan, praznik narodnog prosvetivanja, *Prosvetni glasnik* 43 (1927), 158.

<sup>64</sup> Höpken makes a similar argument, see HÖPKEN, *Zwischen nationaler Sinnstiftung, Jugoslawismus und “Erinnerungschaos”*, 361–363.

<sup>65</sup> Predavanje u svima osnovnim školama na Vidovdan o Samodreži crkvi i o činu koju je u njoj obavljeno uoči Kosovske bitke, *Prosvetni glasnik* 44 (1928), 570.

Petar Zrinski and Krsto Frankopan against the Habsburg dynasty.<sup>66</sup> The rules governing the celebration of school holidays, published 22 September 1928, stipulated that on the day of Zrinski and Frankopan (30 April) a special lecture should be given in all Yugoslav schools.<sup>67</sup> This was obviously an attempt by the authorities to integrate some elements of Croatian history into the new state's commemoration practice. Finally, the curriculum also included the liberation struggle of the Montenegrins under the Petrović dynasty, one of the few attempts to include elements of Montenegrin collective memory in Yugoslav national history.

The Serbian uprisings of 1804 and 1815, and the liberation of Serbia from the Ottomans marked the starting point of the gradual process of national liberation and unification of all South Slavs. Great attention was paid to Serbian political, dynastic and military history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Especially important were the Serbian wars of liberation and unification from 1912–1918. As Melissa Bokovoy has noted in her examination of the commemoration of the Balkan Wars and the First World War in the interwar period, the commemoration of Serbian sacrifices made during these wars elevated the Serbs to a position of “first among equals”.<sup>68</sup> Schools participated in the commemorations of important battles of the Serbian army during the First World War, such as the tenth anniversary of the Battle of Kajmakčalan on 15 September 1926,<sup>69</sup> and the tenth anniversary of the breakthrough at the Thessaloniki front on 15 September 1928.<sup>70</sup> In an amendment to the rule book governing the celebration of school holidays published 20 December 1928, Minister Grol prescribed that all Yugoslav schools should hold special lectures on 29 October, the day the Serbian army liberated the Austro-Hungarian regions.<sup>71</sup> King Aleksandar himself, a member of the Serbian Karađorđević dynasty and thus directly linked to the Serbian state tradition, was glorified as a great national hero especially for his role in the wars of liberation

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<sup>66</sup> Interestingly, the peasant revolt of Matija Gubec was represented as a primarily national revolt for the liberation of the South Slavs from the Habsburg oppression, hence the stress on the cooperation of Slovenian and Croatian peasants. After the Second World War the very same peasant revolt would be represented primarily as a class-based revolt against the oppression of the peasants.

<sup>67</sup> Pravilnik o praznovanju praznika u osnovnim, srednjim i stručnim školama Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca, *Prosvetni glasnik* 44 (1928), 796–798, 797.

<sup>68</sup> Melissa BOKOVOY, Scattered Graves, Ordered Cemeteries. Commemorating Serbia's Wars of National Liberation, 1912–1918, in: Maria BUCUR/Nancy M. WINGFIELD (eds.), *Staging the Past. The Politics of Commemoration in Habsburg Central Europe, 1848 to the Present*. West Lafayette/IN, 2001, 236–254, 252.

<sup>69</sup> Predavanja o Kajmakčalanskoj bitci i njenu značaju na dan 15. septembra ove godine, *Prosvetni glasnik* 42 (1926), 257.

<sup>70</sup> Proslava proboja Solunskog Fronta, *Prosvetni glasnik* 44 (1928), 820f.

<sup>71</sup> Izmjena pomenutih odredaba u Pravilniku o praznovanju praznika, *Prosvetni glasnik* 44 (1928), 1076f.

and unification of 1912–1918. In this regard, it is significant that Aleksandar always appeared in public in his military uniform.<sup>72</sup>

The curricula also paid attention to the Yugoslav revival among South Slavs in Austro-Hungarian regions. Their contributions to Yugoslav unification were situated in the cultural and ideological sphere. The curricula mentioned the establishment of the Illyrian provinces under Napoleon, the Illyrian movement in Croatia and its bonds with Vuk Karadžić, and the battle of the Croats, with Serbian assistance, against the Hungarians in 1848.<sup>73</sup> For each “tribe” the 1933 curriculum selected one figure who had contributed to Yugoslav cultural rebirth in the nineteenth century. For the Serbs this was Vuk Karadžić, who had laid the foundations for the Serbo-Croatian written language. For Slovenes, the curricula mentioned Janez Bleiweis, an influential journalist and politician who introduced Gaj’s script in Slovenian. On the Croatian side, the most important nineteenth-century figure was Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer, who was an important proponent of the Yugoslav idea in both the cultural and political realms. The rule book of 22 September 1928 prescribed that on Strossmayer’s birthday (4 February), lectures should be given in all Yugoslav schools about his importance to the Yugoslav nation.<sup>74</sup> On 20 December 1928 Minister Grol made an important amendment and established Strossmayer’s Day as a school holiday to counterbalance the holiday of St. Sava, which was celebrated just one week earlier, on 27 January.<sup>75</sup> In this manner, St. Sava, the Serbian Orthodox Archbishop, and Strossmayer, the Croatian Catholic Bishop, were intended to become complementary symbols of religious tolerance and national unity.

This brings us to the important theme of religious tolerance. In history curricula religious divisions between the Yugoslavs were de-emphasised through historical explanations. To minimise the Orthodox-Catholic fault line, the curricula pointed out that the Christianisation of the Yugoslav lands had taken place before the Schism of 1054, under the spiritual leadership of St. Cyril and St. Methodius. On 22 September 1928 the Day of Cyril and Methodius (24 May, according to the Orthodox Calendar) was established as an official holiday for all Yugoslav schools.<sup>76</sup> Secondly, the curricula stressed that there had been a battle for the use of the vernacular in liturgy and religious writings in both the Croatian and the Serbian medieval kingdoms, which was interpreted as a parallel battle for the preservation of the national character of religion. For the Serbian side, curricula referred to St. Sava. Similarly, the authentically national character of the Croatian Catholic Church was embodied by Bishop Grgur Ninski (Gregory of

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<sup>72</sup> 17 December, the King’s birthday, was celebrated as a state holiday, see *Pravilnik o praznovanju praznika*, 796.

<sup>73</sup> In 1929 the Illyrian provinces were commemorated with the unveiling of the Napoleon Statue, sculpted by Jože Plečnik, in Ljubljana.

<sup>74</sup> *Pravilnik o praznovanju praznika*, 797.

<sup>75</sup> *Izmena pomenutih odredaba u Pravilniku o praznovanju praznika*, 1076f.

<sup>76</sup> *Pravilnik o praznovanju praznika*, 796.

Nin), the ultimately unsuccessful proponent of the use of the Slavic language in liturgy in medieval Croatia, who took a prominent place in all curricula under scrutiny. That way, the curriculum clearly attempted to connect Grgur Ninski and St. Sava as parallel proponents of a Yugoslav national church, beyond their religious affiliations.<sup>77</sup> In 1929 the 1000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Grgur Ninski was commemorated with the unveiling of a statue by Ivan Meštrović in Split. In an article on the occasion of the commemoration in “Nova Evropa”, Laza Popović stressed that, notwithstanding the ornamental differences between Catholicism and Orthodoxy, there were many similarities in the actual religious experiences of Serbs and Croats because both were closely linked to the common Yugoslav national spirit. This was exemplified by Grgur Ninski, who had fought for a form of religion closer to the people, and thus, for the preservation of the Yugoslav national character of the Croatian church, following the logic of Popović’s Yugoslavism.<sup>78</sup> Further, as we have already mentioned, curricula also appropriated Bishop Strossmayer as the personification of religious tolerance and national consciousness in the Croatian Catholic Church.

The Muslim-Christian fault line occupied a more complicated position in the construction of Yugoslav national identity. In the traditional, pre-First World War definition of both Serbian and Croatian national identity, the “Turks” had occupied a prominent, negative position as the “Other” against whom Serbs and Croats had defended themselves and indeed Christian Europe for centuries.<sup>79</sup> Within the interwar Yugoslav context, this dissociation from everything “Turkish” and Islamic formed a serious obstacle for the integration of South Slav Muslims in the Yugoslav nation. In the curricula of the 1920s no references were made to South Slav Muslims, illustrating that the authorities did not consider the Muslim collective identity important enough to be taken into consideration. Only in the 1933 curriculum was a more qualified position taken toward the Muslim faith, as humble attempts were made to integrate South Slav Muslim symbolic resources into Yugoslav national identity. For the first time, the curriculum covered the conversion to Islam among South Slavs, and mentioned the figure of Mehmed Sokolović, the sixteenth-century Great Vizier of the Ottoman Empire of Bosnian Slavic origin. However, the inclusion of these resources did not drastically change the interpretation of the Yugoslav nation as a primarily Christian nation, an element that obviously hampered the symbolic integration of South Slav Muslims.

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<sup>77</sup> For the Slovenes the curricula emphasised the role of Primož Trubar, who had propagated the use of the vernacular in religious affairs, and could thus be placed next to St. Sava and Grgur Ninski.

<sup>78</sup> L. [Laza Popović], Pred Grgurom Ivana Meštrovića, *Nova Evropa* 20 (1929), no. 1–2, 1–3.

<sup>79</sup> For an overview of the antemurale motif in Croatian symbolic identity, see Ivo ŽANIĆ, The Symbolic Identity of Croatia in the Triangle Crossroads-Bulwark-Bridge, in: Pål KOLSTØ (Hg.), *Myths and Boundaries in South-Eastern Europe*. London 2005, 35–76. For the treatment of South Slav converts to Islam by Serbian historians, see Bojan ALEKSOV, Adamant and Treacherous. Serbian Historians on Religious Conversions, in: KOLSTØ (Hg.), *Myths and Boundaries*, 157–190.

The problematic relationship between religion and Yugoslav national identity became apparent in the controversies surrounding the commemoration of St. Sava. The authorities installed St. Sava as patron saint of education, a practice which had been established in the pre-war Serbian Kingdom. Within the Yugoslav context, however, they attempted to present St. Sava as the first educator of the Yugoslav nation instead of a narrowly Serbian Orthodox figure. The rule book concerning the celebration of school holidays of 22 September 1928 established St. Sava's Day (27 January) as a "day of general cultural-national school celebration".<sup>80</sup> On 28 December, 1928 the ministry formulated more detailed prescriptions to assure "the general state-educational character of the holiday". In schools with a homogenous Orthodox student body, the festivities would be jointly organised by the school direction and the local church. If Orthodox pupils constituted a majority, the church commemoration should be separated from the school festivities, so that non-Orthodox pupils would not have to attend the religious commemoration. Where Orthodox pupils did not constitute a majority, the religious festivities could not be organised in the school building.

"In any case pupils and parents should understand and experience the commemoration of St. Sava [...] as a common popular holiday. Consequently, especially in [religiously] mixed schools attention should be paid so that the program of the festivities (speeches, declamations, songs et cetera) corresponds to the wider spirit of religious tolerance and national unity."<sup>81</sup>

It was within the framework of these attempts to "Yugoslavise" St. Sava that Strossmayer's Day, which was celebrated just one week later, was established as a parallel school holiday.

Although the authorities clearly attempted to represent St. Sava as a Yugoslav national hero, regardless of his religious affiliation, the commemoration of St. Sava in schools met with great resistance from Muslim and Catholic religious authorities. In early 1930 the head of the Islamic Community in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Reis-ul-ulema Čaušević requested that the ministry amend its decision regarding the commemoration of St. Sava in schools, because it was not in line with the fundamentals of Islamic faith and because in practice the celebration of St. Sava's Day had an obvious Serbian Orthodox character.<sup>82</sup> The ministry did not accede and repeated that non-Orthodox pupils would not be required to attend the religious commemoration of St. Sava, but that they would not be freed from attending the school celebration:

"The commemoration of St. Sava is not a religious act or manifestation; it is a celebration of the school, which is a temple devoted to science, education and culture, and belongs to all faiths. The commemoration of 27 January is not a religious ritual, but the recognition of a great historical figure who has done the most for national education and culture, and

<sup>80</sup> Pravilnik o praznovanju praznika, 796.

<sup>81</sup> Proslava Svetog Save; način izvođenja, *Prosvetni glasnik* 45 (1929), 11f.

<sup>82</sup> See Čaušević's letter of 20.1.1930 to the Educational Department of the Drina banovina, and his letter to Minister of Education Božidar Maksimović of 23.1.1930, both in AJ 66-258-500. See also NIELSEN, *One State, One Nation, One King*, 221-225.

that celebration belongs to all faiths, and not only the faith of our first national enlightener. Since this commemoration takes place in school, and not in church, I will strictly punish every pupil who does not attend this commemoration, regardless of his faith.”<sup>83</sup>

In essence, the discussion revolved around the authorities’ premise that a clear distinction could be made between the religious and national commemoration of St. Sava. After several similar complaints had been made by Islamic religious representatives, on 31 December 1932, the ministry acceded and decided that Muslim pupils should not be forced to attend the celebration of St. Sava’s Day at school.<sup>84</sup> However, during Bogoljub Jevtić’s term as Prime Minister from December 1934 to June 1935, this decision was again withdrawn.<sup>85</sup> Finally, the amendments to the law on the Islamic Religious Community of February 1936, which had come about within the framework of the participation of the Yugoslav Muslim Organisation, the main political representative of Bosnian Muslims, in the government of Milan Stojadinović in 1935, regulated that Muslim citizens, including school going children, could not be forced to participate in religious festivities or ceremonies of other religions, and, crucially, added that the Islamic Religious Community had the right to decide which ceremonies this precisely included.<sup>86</sup>

The Catholic Church too criticised the commemoration of St. Sava in school, for similar reasons. On 10 December 1933, the Archbishop of Zagreb, Ante Bauer, requested that the Ministry of Education excuse Catholic pupils from attending the commemoration of St. Sava’s Day.<sup>87</sup> On 13 January 1934 the Archbishop of Vrhbosna, Ivan Šarić, made a similar request, calling it a serious anomaly to bring a religious celebration to school: “If you want to give that celebration an all-national and educational meaning, it should be disposed of all religious elements, if not, it should be restricted to children of the Serbian Orthodox faith.”<sup>88</sup> As to make the circle complete, in the aftermath of the discussions concerning the commemoration of St. Sava in schools, the Patriarchate of the Serbian Orthodox Church demanded that Orthodox pupils no longer be forced to attend the commemoration of Strossmayer’s Day.<sup>89</sup>

This brief overview clarifies that the interpretation of St. Sava as a Yugoslav national hero met with great resistance and illustrates the potential controversies surrounding the

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<sup>83</sup> AJ 66–260–500: Decision of 12.1.1932, quoted in the unpublished report by the Ministry of Education, Svetosavska proslava, Belgrade 1934, p. 1.

<sup>84</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>85</sup> See AJ 66(pov)–46–85: Rezolucija muslimanske ilmiije po pitanju udbenika školske omladine, 10.10.1935.

<sup>86</sup> Adnan ЈАНИЋ, *Obnova autonomije Islamske zajednice u Bosni i Hercegovini 1936. godine, Prilozi 37* (2008), p. 95–111, 101, footnote 18.

<sup>87</sup> Svetosavska proslava, p. 1.

<sup>88</sup> AJ 66–260–500: Letter from the Archbishopric of Vrhbosna to the authorities of Drina banovina, 13 January 1934.

<sup>89</sup> Svetosavska proslava, p. 2.

re-interpretation of symbolic resources linked to certain “tribal” or religious traditions as common Yugoslav national events or figures. Crucially, Yugoslav religious authorities challenged the state authorities’ strategy to make a clear-cut distinction between the religious and national celebration of St. Sava, as well as the authorities’ attempt to integrate and subordinate Yugoslav religions as parts of a common national heritage.

It should also be noted that in some cases the ministry itself violated the principle of keeping the school commemoration of St. Sava strictly separated from the religious celebration. In the first place, it was telling that for Orthodox pupils there seemed to be no need to make a distinction between the religious and national commemoration of St. Sava, as in their cases the school and the local church co-organised the commemoration. Additionally, in a decision of 16 January 1932, the ministry commissioned all Yugoslav schools to collect donations for the building of the Orthodox church of St. Sava in Belgrade.<sup>90</sup> Of course, this met with criticism from non-Orthodox circles. On 30 April 1932, Ante Bauer sent a letter to the Ministry of Education in which he remarked that “St. Sava was not a Yugoslav national saint”, but “a Serbian tribal saint” and that decisions like these violated the principle of religious tolerance. In his response of 4 May 1932, Minister Dragutin Kojić repeated that St. Sava was a pan-Yugoslav national figure, but he did disseminate a circular in which he stressed that contributions for the Church of St. Sava were absolutely voluntarily, especially for non-Orthodox students.<sup>91</sup>

To conclude, in their prescriptions regarding the teaching of Yugoslav history, the educational authorities attempted to reinterpret the histories of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes as part of one national history. As expressed simplistically by Jovan P. Jovanović, the history courses should clarify

that all parts of our nation once lived in a common homeland, that they had the same name, spoke one language and had one faith, and that for those reasons they form one nation; that afterwards an evil historical destiny divided the nation into different states and several faiths, which created differentiation in speech; that the divided tribes suffered under foreign rule, that all our divided tribes fought long battles for their own preservation, liberation and unification, which was finally realised, so that today Serbs, Croats and Slovenes live freely and united in their large, unified and free state.”<sup>92</sup>

In practice, the curriculum emphasised the parallels and common ties in the histories of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. This approach can be categorised under Wachtel’s multicultural model. However, it cannot be denied that symbolic resources from Serbian state history and Serbian Orthodoxy formed the core elements around which Yugoslav history was structured. This became especially clear in the 1933 curriculum for the first year of history education, which only mentioned ten crucial figures from Yugoslav history. Of these figures, four were drawn from Serbian national history: St. Sava, Marko

<sup>90</sup> Podizanje hrama Sv. Sava u Beogradu – predavanja i skupljanje priloga na dan 10 maja ove godine, *Prosvetni glasnik* 48 (1932), 33.

<sup>91</sup> Both letters can be found in AJ 66–259–500.

<sup>92</sup> Jovan P. JOVANOVIĆ, Novi nastavni plan za osnovne škole, *Učitelj* 8 (1927), no. 3, 272–283, 279.

Kraljević, Prince Lazar and Karađorđe.<sup>93</sup> King Petar Karađorđević and King Aleksandar Karađorđević were also obviously linked to the Serbian state tradition, but as kings of the Yugoslav Kingdom, in theory they could be interpreted as common Yugoslav national symbols. Sts. Cyril and Methodius were celebrated by both Catholics and Orthodox in Yugoslavia. Only two of the historical figures mentioned were strictly Croatian: Nikola Šubić Zrinski and Strossmayer. No Slovenian, Muslim, Macedonian, or Montenegrin historical figures were mentioned. The Slovenian case is particularly striking, because Slovenes were recognised as one of the three constituent Yugoslav “tribes”.

We could thus conclude that the Serbian domination in the Yugoslav state was also reflected in the selection of symbolic resources in the teaching of Yugoslav national history.<sup>94</sup> Symbolic resources from the non-Serbian traditions were selected on the basis of their potential parallelism with Serbian core elements. Although the authorities attempted to detach Serbian resources from their narrow Serbian interpretation, often such interpretations remained highly controversial, as exemplified by the controversial establishment of St. Sava as a Yugoslav national figure. In this case, the authorities attempted to decouple St. Sava from his Serbian Orthodox affiliation and to introduce Strossmayer, Grgur Ninski and Primož Trubar as South Slav Catholic counterparts of St. Sava. Still, it is illustrative of the interwar era that the figure who was selected to be commemorated in schools as the first and greatest Yugoslav national educator was imported from Serbian historical memory, and that the Yugoslav historical narrative as presented in the state’s educational policy departed from a close link between nation and church, a well-established element in the Serbian national narrative, which Klaus Buchenau has aptly called “*der Orthodoxe Vorsprung*” over other religious institutions in the Yugoslav lands at the time.<sup>95</sup>

### **Geography: Redrawing the Map of Yugoslavia**

Geography curricula determined that the ultimate goal of geography education was the development of love toward the homeland. Thereby curricula did not give lists of icons of national landscape, but rather established a framework through which sub-national symbolic resources and territorialities could be incorporated into the Yugoslav national landscape. Curricula prescribed that in the third year pupils should learn about

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<sup>93</sup> However, Wachtel notes that Marko Kraljević’s importance was not exclusively to the Serbs, because the battles he fought were “not so much with the Turks as within himself”, and therefore he also appealed to the non-Serbian sections of the population: WACHTEL, *Making a Nation*, 102.

<sup>94</sup> Höpken comes to a similar conclusion regarding the commemoration policy of the new state. See HÖPKEN, *Zwischen nationaler Sinnstiftung, Jugoslawismus und “Erinnerungschaos”*, especially 361–365.

<sup>95</sup> Klaus BUCHENAU, *Katholizismus und Jugoslawismus. Zur Nationalisierung der Religion bei den Kroaten, 1918–1945*, in: Hartmut LEHMANN / Michael GEYER (eds.), *Religion und Nation, Nation und Religion. Beiträge zu einer unbewältigten Geschichte*. Göttingen 2006, 225–254, 226–229.

the direct surroundings of the school, the political district (srez) it was located in, and the larger geographical region. Then, in the fourth year the pupil learned about all other Yugoslav geographical regions and obtained a synthesised overview of the Yugoslav lands. These were the regions suggested in the 1926 curriculum:

- Yugoslav Alps, comprising the administrative districts of Maribor and Ljubljana (the left bank of the Sava river).<sup>96</sup>
- Dinaric highland: Ljubljana (right bank of the Sava), Primorsko-Krajina (Karlovac), Split, Dubrovnik, Mostar, Travnik, Sarajevo, Tuzla, Bihać, Vrbas (Banja Luka) and the western part of Zeta (Cetinje).
- Macedonian lands: Skopje, Bregalnica, Bitola, southern Raška (Čačak), southern Kosovo and the eastern part of Zeta (Cetinje).
- East-Serbian highland: northern part of Kosovo, Niš, Timok (Zaječar), Morava (Ćuprija), Kruševac and Požarevac.
- West-Serbian highland: Belgrade and Podunavlje (right bank of the Danube, Smederevo), Šumadija (Kragujevac), northern Raška (Čačak), Užice, Valjevo, Podrinje (Šabac).
- Croato-Slavonian basin: Zagreb, Osijek, Srem (Vukovar).
- Pannonian plain: Belgrade and Podunavlje (left bank of the Danube), and Bačka (Novi Sad).

In 1927 a slightly different regional division was proposed:

- Yugoslav Alps: Ljubljana and Maribor
- Croatian Karst and the Croato-Slavonia basin: Primorsko-Krajina, Zagreb, Osijek, Srem.
- Dinaric coastal area: Split, Dubrovnik and Western Zeta.
- Dinaric mountains: Bihać, Travnik, Vrbas, Tuzla, Sarajevo, Mostar.
- The mountain lands of Southern Serbia: Bitola, Bregalnica, Skopje, Vranje, Southern Kosovo and Eastern Zeta.
- Mountain lands of Eastern Serbia: Northern Kosovo, Niš, Timok, Požarevac, Morava, Kruševac.
- Mountains of Western Serbia: Podunavlje and Belgrade (right bank of the Sava), Šumadija, Raška, Užice, Valjevo, Podrinje.
- Pannonian plain: Belgrade and Podunavlje (left bank of the Danube), Bačka.

The most important difference between the two curricula was that in the 1926 curricula Bosnia, Herzegovina, Dalmatia and parts of Montenegro were all grouped into one large geographical unit of the Dinaric highlands. Regardless of these differences, it is clear that the regions proposed in these geography curricula did not differ greatly from the pre-war historical regions, although the curriculum did refrain from using

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<sup>96</sup> In 1922 the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was divided in 33 administrative units called oblasti. In most cases the oblast was named after its most important city or town. Where this was not the case I have added the name of the most important city or town.

their traditional names. This is especially true for the 1927 curriculum, in which the region of the Yugoslav Alps corresponded to Slovenia, the Dinaric coast to Dalmatia, the Dinaric Mountains to Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Pannonian plain to Vojvodina. The question of whether or not traditional historical regions should remain in use for the internal division of the country concurs with the broader discussion concerning the place of the Yugoslav “tribes” within Yugoslav national identity. The ambiguous approach adopted in the geography curricula of the 1920s clarifies the complexity of the matter.

In his evaluation of the 1927 curriculum, Jovan Jovanović, a prominent figure in the Association of Yugoslav Teachers, argued that the history and geography curricula should use the traditional names for the country’s historical regions because this was not harmful to national unity and because the people would continue to use these names anyway.<sup>97</sup> Instead, within the Royal Dictatorship’s integral Yugoslav ideology the opposite strategy was chosen to territorialise Yugoslav national identity. On 3 October 1929, the country was divided into new administrative units, called banovinas. With the exception of the Littoral (Primorska) banovina, these regional entities were all named after rivers. In all cases, except Drava banovina, their boundaries cut across the old historical regions:

- Drava banovina (Ljubljana): Slovenian lands in the Yugoslav Kingdom.
- Sava banovina (Zagreb): the historical regions Croatia and Slavonia without Srem and parts of eastern Slavonia.
- Littoral banovina (Split): northern and central Dalmatia and western Herzegovina.
- Vrbas banovina (Banja Luka): north-western and northern Bosnia.
- Drina banovina (Sarajevo): south-eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina, parts of western Serbia and parts of eastern Slavonia.
- Zeta banovina (Cetinje): southern Dalmatia, Montenegro, south-eastern Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Sandžak and western Kosovo.
- Danube banovina (Novi Sad): Srem, Baranja, Bačka, Banat and north-central Serbia.
- Morava banovina (Niš): eastern and central Serbia with a small part of northern Kosovo.
- Vardar banovina (Skopje): southern Serbia, eastern Kosovo and Macedonia.
- Belgrade constituted a separate administrative entity with Zemun and Pančevo.

On 2 November 1931, the Ministry of Education decreed that geography courses for the third and fourth years of elementary school should conform to the banovinas instead of the geographical regions described in the 1927 curriculum.<sup>98</sup> Thus, in the third year of elementary school pupils learned about their banovina, in the fourth year they learned about the other banovinas. Although the authorities represented the banovinas as a radical departure from the historical regions and “tribal separatism”, in

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<sup>97</sup> JOVANOVIĆ, Novi nastavni plan, 276f.

<sup>98</sup> Nastavno gradivo iz zemljopisa za III i IV razred osnovnih škola ima se obrađivati po banovinama, *Prosvetni glasnik* 47 (1931), 908.

this case, too, the new regional divisions did not simply ignore traditional historical entities. First, the Slovenian territorial entity was left intact as Drava banovina. As was also the case for language, a status quo policy toward Slovenian identity within the larger unity of Yugoslavia was maintained. Further, in its obvious attempt to cut across the boundaries of the other historical regions and thus emphasise the geographical bonds between these regions, the banovinas continued to make use of the traditional regional division of Yugoslavia. Wachtel's categorisation does not apply easily to geography, but when the regional re-division suggested in the banovina system is interpreted as a framework to embed sub-national landscape resources within a Yugoslav national territory and to highlight geographical bonds across historical regional boundaries, Wachtel's multicultural model best describes this strategy. The case of Slovenia/Drava banovina can be categorised under Wachtel's model of cultural cooperation.

### Conclusion

In this final section I present some concluding remarks concerning the institutionalisation of Yugoslav nationhood in school curricula. First, Wachtel's romantic model, in which one existing culture – probably Serbian culture in the political context of interwar Yugoslavia – would be chosen as the standard for Yugoslav national culture, was not applied in any of the curricula. I found no evidence in support of Džaja's claim that the educational policy of the new Yugoslav state was based on "eine Verdrängung von nichtserbischen Traditionen und ihre direkte oder indirekte Substituierung durch [...] serbische Infrastrukturen".<sup>99</sup> We should be careful not to let evaluations of Serbian domination in the political life of the new state determine our assessment of how Yugoslav nationhood was institutionalised culturally in the first Yugoslavia. Admittedly, the main failing of interwar Yugoslav curricula, especially those for history, was that the core elements of Yugoslav national culture were taken from Serbian collective identity, but it should be taken into consideration that attempts were made to include non-Serbian symbolic resources in Yugoslav national culture. Thus, there was clearly no outright repression of Croatian and Slovenian cultural traditions in the curricula.

Secondly, regardless of the negative discourses – especially during the dictatorship – surrounding the persistence of Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian "tribal" traditions, these categories of perception were not simply abandoned in the definition of Yugoslav national identity. On the contrary, to define the Yugoslav language, history and geography, the authorities deployed symbolic resources that were already firmly linked to Serbian, Croatian or Slovenian collective identity. In the curricula I have examined, these resources were either reinterpreted and detached from any exclusive Serbian, Croatian or Slovenian framework, as was attempted in the curricula for history and to a certain

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<sup>99</sup> Srećko M. DŽAJA, *Die politische Realität des Jugoslawismus (1918–1991)*. Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung Bosnien-Herzegowinas. München 2002 (Untersuchungen zur Gegenwartskunde Südosteuropas, 37), 60.

extent also geography, or these different traditions were accepted as constituent and related parts of an overarching Yugoslav culture, as in the language curricula, and, in the Slovenian case, also for geography. Other scholars have often argued that Yugoslav nation-building necessarily implied the *elimination* of established Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian collective identities. Consequently, they argue that the chances of success for the interwar Yugoslav nation-building project were slim, precisely because it had to *compete* with already established Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian national identities.<sup>100</sup> My examination clarifies that the Yugoslav collective identity that was proposed in the curricula did not envisage the elimination and replacement of sub-national collective identities. Rather, the curricula attempted to *mobilise* established collective identities in the direction of an overarching Yugoslav collectivity. Of course, the controversies surrounding Yugoslav nationhood in the first Yugoslav state illustrate that Yugoslav nation-building was very vulnerable to competing claims from the sub-national level, precisely because it made use of symbolic resources that were already linked to Serbian, Croatian or Slovenian collective identities. But an explanation of the highly controversial nature of Yugoslav nation-building in education cannot be found in the alleged predetermined incompatibility of collective identities in the South Slav lands. In my opinion, a more fruitful approach departs from the concrete institutionalisation of Yugoslav nationhood and other collective identities in the interwar period.

Finally, it should be noted that educational authorities mainly employed Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian sub-national identities for the definition of Yugoslav national identity in curricula. Of the three sub-national categories recognised, Slovenian individuality occupied a peripheral position. Very few attempts were made to detach Slovenian symbolic resources from a primarily Slovenian framework or to reinterpret these resources from an obviously Yugoslav ideological standpoint. Slovenian culture was tolerated as a related but separate cultural unit within the overarching Yugoslav culture. Apart from the three accepted “tribes”, no significant attempts were made to include symbolic resources linked to other South Slav collective identities in Yugoslav national culture. Thus, we encounter very few elements that could mobilise Montenegrin, Macedonian or Bosnian Muslim collective identities as constituent parts of

<sup>100</sup> In his study of interwar Yugoslav education and textbooks, Charles Jelavich adopts an almost deterministic approach, claiming that the concrete usage of Yugoslavism in textbooks and education laws merely reflected the centuries-old national divisions and antagonism among the Yugoslav nations. In his view, Yugoslavism was incompatible with any remnant of Serbianism, Croatianism or Slovenianism. See Charles JELAVICH, Education, Textbooks and South Slav Nationalisms in the Interwar Era, in: Norbert REITER/Holm SUNDHAUSSEN (eds.), *Allgemeinbildung als Modernisierungsfaktor. Zur Geschichte der Elementarbildung in Südosteuropa von der Aufklärung bis zum Zweiten Weltkrieg*, Wiesbaden 1994, 127–142. Höpken adopts a more balanced position and takes into consideration the concrete institutionalisation of Yugoslavism in the interwar state. Nevertheless, he ascribes the failure of Yugoslav nation-building to the fact that Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian memory landscapes “nur mehr schwer zu *verdrängen* waren” by Yugoslav national culture, HÖPKEN, *Zwischen nationaler Sinnstiftung, Jugoslawismus und “Erinnerungschaos”*, 361f. (emphasis P.T.).

Yugoslav nationhood. Apparently, educational authorities believed that these categories of collective identity were insignificant and would be integrated within Yugoslav national identity as undifferentiated parts of one of the recognised Yugoslav “tribes”, without direct appeals to their distinct traditions. Only the inclusion of some symbolic resources linked to South Slav Muslims in the 1933 history curricula indicates an incipient awareness among educational authorities that a sense of collective identity among South Slav Muslims should be taken into consideration. Non-South Slav minorities, including Germans, Hungarians, Rumanians, and Albanians, were completely excluded from Yugoslav national identity in the curricula.

### **ABSTRACT**

#### **Between Tribes and Nation: The Definition of Yugoslav National Identity in Interwar Yugoslav Elementary School Curricula**

Although Yugoslav nationalism rose to prominence in the interwar period as an underlying ideological principle of the Yugoslav state, various interpretations of the idea coexisted in the political and cultural spheres. This article examines how Yugoslav national identity was defined in elementary education curricula for language, history and geography. Although linguistic unity was considered one of the fundamentals of Yugoslav national unity, no far-reaching measures were enacted to set a uniform Yugoslav standard language. Slovenian was treated as a separate language, and different dialects and alphabets within Serbo-Croatian were accepted. Curricula for history stressed the similarities and parallels between different “tribal” (Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian) histories. These curricula also reinterpreted symbolic resources, which had already been linked to Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian national histories, as common Yugoslav national symbols. Serbian state history provided the core elements around which this Yugoslav synthesis was constructed. Finally, the curricula for geography attempted to replace the traditional historical regions with neutral geographical entities. After some flawed attempts during the 1920s, the geography curriculum of 1933 adopted the new administrative division of Yugoslavia in banovinas. For each of the subjects under scrutiny a different strategy was adopted. In all cases, however, there remained considerable overlap between Yugoslav national identity and established definitions of sub-national collective identities among the South Slavs.