

## Introduction

When the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes – from 1929 Kingdom of Yugoslavia – was formed in 1918, one of its most important tasks was to forge a common collective identity. Intellectual elites in the young state with great optimism agreed that education would play a crucial role in this process. It should come as no surprise, then, that a relatively rich tradition of scholarly research into the representation of collective identities in Yugoslav education has originated, precisely to account for the failure of the Yugoslav project in the long term. Recently, a growing body of scholarly research has established textbooks as one of the more rewarding sources for studying collective identity in education, focusing on ‘what knowledge is included and rejected in ... textbooks, and how the transmission of this selected knowledge often attempts to shape a particular form of national memory, national identity and national consciousness’.<sup>1</sup> For the Yugoslav case this emerging research field so far has primarily examined textbooks which were used in the period directly preceding, during and following the disintegration of Yugoslavia.<sup>2</sup> However, as the present article hopes to illustrate, textbook analysis can also provide the historian with interesting new elements for the study of collective identities in Yugoslavia’s more distant past.

With its focus on national identity in Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian textbooks before the First World War, and later also in interwar Yugoslavia, the work of Charles Jelavich still occupies a somewhat isolated position.<sup>3</sup> Jelavich’s conclusion for both periods is simple: students were not taught Yugoslavism, but Serbianism, Croatianism and Slovenianism, and textbooks merely expressed ‘fundamental divisions that existed among [Serbs, Croats and Slovenes] for centuries’.<sup>4</sup> Although at first sight this conclusion seems plausible, especially because it concurs with the commonly held assumption that Yugoslavia failed because of competing Serbian and Croatian national ideologies,<sup>5</sup> it fails to take into consideration the multifaceted character of collective identities in interwar Yugoslavia. Indeed, the historian examining the educational policy and practice of the Yugoslav Kingdom is confronted with a patchwork of collective identities, with shifting boundaries, zones of overlap, and varying mutual relations, a telling illustration of what Rogers Brubaker has aptly called the ‘protean and polymorphous’ character of nations.<sup>6</sup> Especially in rejecting any interaction between the ideology of Yugoslav national unity, which formed the ideological fundament for the new state, and Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian collective identities – in the discourse of the interwar period these were recognised as ‘tribes’, three sub-national entities within the

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<sup>1</sup> Stuart Foster and Keith Crawford, ‘Introduction: The Critical Importance of History Textbook Research’, in: *What Shall We Tell the Children? : International Perspectives on School History Textbooks*, eds. Stuart Foster and Keith Crawford (Greenwich: Information Age, 2006), 2. A strong plea for textbook analysis in research on the construction of knowledge and the ‘production of a hegemony of ideas’ was made by John Issitt, ‘Reflections on the Study of Textbooks’, *History of Education* 33, no. 6 (2004), 688–9.

<sup>2</sup> See the contributions to Wolfgang Höpken, ed., *Oil on Fire? Textbooks, Ethnic Stereotypes and Violence in South-Eastern Europe* (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1996) or Augusta Dimou, ed., *Transition and the Politics of History Education in Southeast Europe* (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Charles Jelavich, *South Slav Nationalisms: Textbooks and Yugoslav Union before 1914* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1990); Charles Jelavich, ‘Education, Textbooks and South Slav Nationalisms in the Interwar Era’, in: *Allgemeinbildung als Modernisierungsfaktor*, eds. Norbert Reiter and Hold Sundhaussen (Wiesbaden: Hassarowitz Verlag, 1994), 127–42; Charles Jelavich, ‘South Slav Education: Was There Yugoslavism?’, in: *Yugoslavia and Its Historians: Understanding the Balkan Wars of the 1990s*, eds. Norman M. Naimark and Holly Case (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 93–115.

<sup>4</sup> Jelavich, *South Slav Nationalisms*, 265. For a similar conclusion for interwar textbooks, see Jelavich, ‘Education, Textbooks’, 139.

<sup>5</sup> For a recent challenge to this approach with regard to interwar Yugoslavia’s political life, which has highly influenced my own views on interwar Yugoslav society, see Dejan Djokić, *Elusive Compromise, A History of Interwar Yugoslavia* (London: Hurst & Company, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 10.

Yugoslav nation <sup>7</sup> – Jelavich's substantialist approach, which sees Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian nations as strictly delineated and historically invariable entities, is unconvincing.

Historians of regions have suggested an alternative by arguing that sub-national identities have not been superseded by national identities in the age of modernisation, but should rather be understood as categories of perception which 'allowed for both resistance to and accommodation of nationalizing forces, often in the same places but to varying degrees'.<sup>8</sup> National and sub-national identities should not be seen as mutually exclusive, but rather as interactional and intertwined categories. As a result, national culture 'becomes a multifaceted thing, more a complex amalgam of criss-crossing movements toward integration and differentiation than a set of finite and quantitatively manifest characteristics or a collection of hegemonic and centralizing strategies'.<sup>9</sup> For the case of interwar Yugoslavia, such an approach clarifies that Yugoslav and Serbian, Croatian or Slovenian (or for that matter any other sub-national) collective identities should not be seen as inherently antagonistic and mutually exclusive forces. Textbooks in particular present a fine target to study the persistence and interaction of these various levels of collective identity.<sup>10</sup>

Further support for a more dynamical approach to national identities has been provided by Oliver Zimmer, who has presented a useful framework to study the 'process whereby 'the nation' is reconstructed over time'.<sup>11</sup> First, he distinguishes *boundary mechanisms* 'which social actors use as they reconstruct the boundaries of national identities at a particular point in time'.<sup>12</sup> These mechanisms range between two ideal typical extremes: a voluntarist, and an organic or deterministic conception of nationhood. At the same time, Zimmer distinguishes between four types of *symbolic resources*, namely: political values/institutions, culture, history and geography.

These symbolic resources provide the symbolic raw material, as it were, which social actors use as they define national identities in public discourse. Yet, depending on which boundary mechanism they employ – voluntary or organic – a different picture of national identity emerges.<sup>13</sup>

Importantly, these constructions are not completely arbitrary, rather, 'the public definition (and re-definition) of national identity is contingent within certain limitations', and takes the form of 'novel combinations' of symbolic resources, rather than of 'pure invention'.<sup>14</sup> In this article I will apply this model to examine the process of defining and redefining collective identity in the textbooks under scrutiny, thus compensating for the lack of theorised methodological principles in textbook analysis, an issue recently raised by Foster and Crawford.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> For an overview of the Yugoslav national ideology of ruling political elites during the interwar period, see Pieter Troch, 'Yugoslavism Between the World Wars: Indecisive Nation-Building', *Nationalities Papers* 38, no. 2 (2010), 227–44.

<sup>8</sup> Celia Applegate, 'A Europe of Regions: Reflections on the Historiography of Sub-National Places in Modern Times', *American Historical Review*, 104 (October 1999), 1177.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 1173.

<sup>10</sup> This approach has already been applied successfully to textbooks by Katharine Kennedy, who has studied how regionally differentiated readers contributed to the building of German nationhood in Wilhelmine Germany. Katharine D. Kennedy, 'A Nation's Readers: Cultural Integration and the Schoolbook Canon in Wilhelmine Germany', *Paedagogica Historica* 33, no. 2 (1997), 459–80.

<sup>11</sup> Oliver Zimmer, 'Boundary mechanisms and symbolic resources: towards a process-orientated approach to national identity', *Nations and Nationalism* 9, no. 2 (2003), 173.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 179–80.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 173–4.

<sup>15</sup> Foster and Crawford, 'Introduction', 11.

Departing from this methodological approach, which allows for various definitions and re-definitions of collective identity, both diachronically and synchronically, this article will examine the definition of Yugoslav and Serbian collective identity in textbooks for elementary education published in Belgrade during the interwar period. It should be stressed in advance that this approach does not assume the existence of a homogeneous consensus on Serbian collective identity (be it within an overarching Yugoslav unity or not) among Serbian intellectuals, let alone 'the Serbian people' in its entirety. However, I have found that textbooks published in Belgrade during the interwar period showed a high degree of uniformity with regard to the definition of collective identity, and can therefore be studied as one whole. I will focus on two specific research questions in this article. First, I will examine how the imagination of collective identities in these textbooks changed through interaction between the Yugoslav ideology which – as we will see – increasingly determined the state's educational policy, and Serbian collective identity as it had been defined in pre-war Serbian textbooks.<sup>16</sup> Second, I will determine what were the common denominators which served as mediators between these collective identities, and additionally make some hypothetical remarks with regard to their potential viability for non-Serbian sub-national definitions of Yugoslav identity.<sup>17</sup>

### **In search of ideal Yugoslav textbooks**

In the immediate post-war period many educational experts acknowledged that textbooks which had been used before the war were no longer suitable, not only because they were simply outdated, but, more importantly, because the great regional differences between them would not serve the ideal of Yugoslav national unity. In March 1924 for example representatives of Yugoslav teachers argued that:

readers and primers, even if they somehow satisfied the needs of our schools in pre-war circumstances, now, after the war, should be fundamentally revised in accordance with the circumstances created by the liberation and unification of our three-named nation in one state.<sup>18</sup>

In order to satisfy the pressing demand for textbooks, the Main Educational Board, an advisory organ to the Ministry of Education, introduced temporary regulations which prescribed that pre-war textbooks could be republished, on the condition that a minimum of information on history, language and literature of other Yugoslav peoples and regions was included, and that all textbooks were reviewed and approved by the Board. For readers, the authorities prescribed that texts in both the Latin and the Cyrillic alphabet, and in Slovenian should be included. Slovenian textbooks should add extracts in Serbo-Croatian. Geography textbooks should treat the entire Yugoslav kingdom. For history textbooks, finally, short overviews of the history of other parts of the Yugoslav nation should be added. Thus, it was accepted that new editions of pre-war textbooks would maintain a regional bias, but it was envisaged that these measures would gradually lead to the rapprochement of different regional

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<sup>16</sup> For a thorough examination of the exclusively Serbian definition of national identity in pre-First World War Serbian textbooks, see Jelavich, *South Slav Nationalisms*, 68–98, 139–60, 177–208.

<sup>17</sup> The notion of 'common denominator' as the symbolic framework which holds the nation together in spite of social, cultural and political conflicts over the correct definition of nationhood was introduced by Alon Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor. Württemberg, Imperial Germany and National Memory, 1871–1918* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), esp. 3–13.

<sup>18</sup> Damon i Fintija, 'Kakve treba da su nam čitanke?', *Učitelj* 4, no. 10 (October 1924), 654–5. In the discourse of the period, Serbs, Croats and Slovenes were considered three names for the same, Yugoslav nation, hence 'three-named nation'.

textbooks and, in the end, uniform Yugoslav textbooks.<sup>19</sup> At the same time the Main Educational Board and the Ministry of Education also attempted to stimulate and regulate the publication of new textbooks, by legalising a rulebook, which prescribed that all textbooks should be approved by the Ministry of Education before they could be used in schools. Decisions would be made on the basis of reviews made by representatives of the Main Educational Board. Approvals would remain valid for four years, after which textbooks should be re-evaluated. Further, the ministry would organise competitions for textbooks, and the publication of the winning copies would be financed by the state.<sup>20</sup>

In practice, however, the rulebook for textbooks was not fully concretised because the educational authorities failed to provide substantial guidelines concerning the actual teaching material which should be treated in textbooks. Until the late 1920s no education laws or curricula for the entire kingdom had been legalised.<sup>21</sup> Illustrative is that only one competition for textbooks was organised in the 1920s. On 23 March 1923 the Main Educational Board opened a competition for readers for all four years of lower elementary education. It was clarified that primers and readers for the first two years should be submitted in three identical copies, one in the Cyrillic alphabet, one in the Latin alphabet and one in the Slovenian 'dialect'.<sup>22</sup> From the third year there should be one Serbo-Croatian reader in Cyrillic and Latin alternately and one in the Slovenian 'dialect'. Moreover, all the material in these books should reflect the idea of national unity. The winning textbook for each year would be published by the state publishing house, the second and third best could also be used in schools.<sup>23</sup> However, it never came to a successful completion of the competition, and on 14 July 1926 the Ministry of Education 'temporarily' abandoned its intentions to select a limited number of uniform textbooks for the entire state, and, instead, published an extensive list of textbooks approved for use in elementary education.<sup>24</sup>

On 6 January 1929 King Alexander established a Royal Dictatorship, the ultimate goal of which was to preserve and strengthen the unity of the Yugoslav state and nation. The King hoped to achieve this by strictly controlling and homogenising political and cultural life.<sup>25</sup> A crucial role in the process of Yugoslav national unification was reserved for education. As Minister of Education Božidar Maksimović expressed it when presenting his ministerial policy to the council of ministers on 12 March 1929: 'The goal of elementary education is not only to spread literacy, but, even more, to educate nationally'.<sup>26</sup> In a country with an average illiteracy rate of 44,6% in 1931, increasing to 70% and higher in certain regions, the meaning of such a statement can hardly be overestimated.<sup>27</sup> A whole series of education laws was adopted in order to establish a truly uniform Yugoslav educational system under the absolute

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<sup>19</sup> Vladeta Tešić, *Sto godina prosvetnog saveta Srbije, 1880–1980* (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, 1980), 105–6.

<sup>20</sup> The rulebook is included in the minutes of the sessions of the Main Educational Board between 31 August 1920 and 1 February 1921, *Glasnik profesorskog društva* 1 (1921), 88–9.

<sup>21</sup> Education laws were only legalised after the establishment of the Royal Dictatorship in 1929. A first, temporary, curriculum for elementary education was adopted in 1927.

<sup>22</sup> The constitution of 1921 had termed the state language 'Serbo-Croato-Slovenian' and many national ideologists also referred to Yugoslav linguistic unity, reducing Slovenian to a dialect of this overarching Yugoslav language.

<sup>23</sup> 'Stečaj za izradu bukvara i čitanaka za osnovne škole u Kraljevini Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca', *Prosvetni glasnik* 40 (1923), 147–8 (službeni deo).

<sup>24</sup> See decree O.n. Br. 1248, in *Prosvetni glasnik* 42 (1926), 363.

<sup>25</sup> Christian Axboe Nielsen, 'One State, One Nation, One King: The Dictatorship of King Aleksandar and His Yugoslav Project, 1929–1935', doctoral dissertation (Columbia University, 2002), 123–239.

<sup>26</sup> Ljubodrag Dimić, Nikola Žutić and Blagoje Isailović, eds., *Zapisnici sa sednica ministarskog saveta Kraljevine Jugoslavije 1929–1931* (Belgrade: JP Službeni list SRJ / Arhiv Jugoslavije, 2002), 34.

<sup>27</sup> Ljubodrag Dimić, *Kulturna politika Kraljevine Jugoslavije, 1918–1941*, vol. 2 (Belgrade: Stubovi kulture, 1997), 192.

authority of the state. The Law on Textbooks of 27 September 1929 established a full state monopoly on the publication of textbooks. It was prescribed that a competition for textbooks be set up every four years. On these occasions, the Ministry of Education would select one annual textbook per subject, in consultation with the Main Educational Board.<sup>28</sup> These textbooks would be published by the state publishing house and would be the only ones approved for use in Yugoslav schools.

Again the deadline set in the law – by the start of the school year 1931–32 Yugoslav schools should make use of uniform state textbooks – proved to be unfeasible, and in practice the procedure which had been applied with regard to textbooks before 1929 was maintained. Only on 15 February 1935 a competition was set up for textbooks for elementary schools, more precisely readers and grammars for what was called ‘Serbo-Croato-Slovenian’ for all four years of elementary education, history textbooks for the third and fourth year, and one geography textbook for the third and fourth year, along with textbooks for arithmetic, nature study and practical economy (agriculture and housekeeping). For all textbooks a detailed list of instructions was added. For the readers, texts should be adapted to the new orthographical instructions for Serbo-Croatian the Ministry had legalised in June 1929. Compilers should include extracts of the best and most representative work of national writers, taking into consideration that writers from all three ‘tribes’ of the nation should be equally represented, so that readers would become anthologies of Yugoslav literature. They should have an encyclopaedic character, enrich the character of the pupils, stimulate their self-confidence and sense of duty, and above all spread love toward fatherland and nation. Texts should be presented in their authentic dialect, and both alphabets should be represented equally.<sup>29</sup> Material of Slovenian writers should be included in Slovenian so that other pupils would become familiarised with the general characteristics of the Slovenian ‘speech’.<sup>30</sup> For history, the textbooks should meticulously follow the curriculum which had been legalised in 1933. History textbooks should arouse ‘pride, self-confidence and faith in the nation’ by emphasising ‘those historical moments which illustrate the moral strength, force and persistence of the nation’, and ‘stress the efforts of our nation to establish a common state, develop a strong consciousness about national tasks, and convince [the pupils] that centripetal efforts brought the homeland to strength and greatness, whereas centrifugal tendencies always lead to negative results’.<sup>31</sup> Geography textbooks should follow the new administrative entities of the country, the so-called *banovinas*.<sup>32</sup> In October 1929 a new administrative division of Yugoslavia had been implemented, establishing nine provinces – banovinas. All banovinas, except for Coastal banovina, were named after rivers and as a rule their boundaries cut across historical regional boundaries. As such, they were explicitly intended to replace traditional historical regions in the country.<sup>33</sup>

By this time, opposition against the authoritarian and unitary policy of the dictatorship had become more outspoken,<sup>34</sup> as reflected in the growing criticism against the monopolisation and homogenisation of textbooks, especially in the ranks of the Association of Yugoslav

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<sup>28</sup> ‘Zakon o udžbenicima za narodne, građanske, učiteljske i srednje škole’, *Službene novine* 11, no. 230 (1929), 1858–9.

<sup>29</sup> Serbo-Croatian literary language has two major dialects, ekavian and ijekavian, and is written in two alphabets, Cyrillic and Latin. Although these language variants do not provide a clear-cut demarcation line between Croats and Serbs, for the sake of clarity it can be argued that in the interwar period ekavian and Cyrillic were generally linked to the Serbian, and ijekavian and Latin to the Croatian tribe.

<sup>30</sup> See the ministerial decree O.n. Br. 1801, *Prosvetni glasnik* 51 (1935), 174–5.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Nielsen, *One State*, 167–84.

<sup>34</sup> After the assassination of King Alexander in France in October 1934 the authoritarian policy of the dictatorship was gradually relaxed under a new government headed by Prime Minister Milan Stojadinović.

Teachers. In its annual report for 1934–35 the Association argued that the creation of uniform national feelings did not require the complete unification and homogenisation of the educational system, but:

a direct program, through which and in the spirit of which curricula would be differentiated with regard to local circumstances. ... On no account only one textbook for the entire state can be foreseen and approved, but, to the contrary, their variety and richness should be favoured. From our national point of view the proposed unification presents impoverishment and regression instead of progress.<sup>35</sup>

Clearly, the complete homogenisation of the educational system was no longer seen as a prerequisite for the strengthening of Yugoslav national unity. More and more educational experts argued that regional differences should be taken into account in textbooks, and that only by respecting regional varieties Yugoslav national unity could be established. As a result of the strong criticism against the textbook competition, its full implementation was initially postponed, and later, by a ministerial decree of 19 August 1937, the old practice with regard to textbooks was reinstated.<sup>36</sup> On 26 February 1938 the Ministry of Education organised a meeting with representatives of publishing houses and educational institutions, where it was concluded that the monopolisation of textbooks by the state was harmful, and that progress could only be reached through healthy competition in the writing and publication of textbooks.<sup>37</sup> On 24 October 1938, finally, Minister of Education Dimitrije Magarašević published a long list of textbooks which could be used in all types of schools in Yugoslavia.<sup>38</sup> On 11 May 1939 Minister Stevan Ćirić legalised a procedure which fully reinstated the earlier practice with regard to the approval of textbooks.<sup>39</sup>

In conclusion, notwithstanding several attempts to come to a series of uniform textbooks which could be used statewide, a large number of textbooks remained available per subject during the interwar period. In Ljubljana a whole series of textbooks was published, which because of the obvious linguistic differences were only used in the Slovenian part of the Yugoslav kingdom. Serbo-Croatian textbooks were published in Belgrade, and to a lesser extent in Zagreb. In this case too, textbooks, especially during the 1920s, had an obvious regional target group.<sup>40</sup> Regardless of the wide variety of textbooks, however, obvious incentives had been created to incorporate elements of Yugoslav national ideology in textbooks, most importantly through the (belated) formulation of curricula and legal regulations concerning textbooks. For the textbooks of the 1930s it should not be forgotten that they were – at least according to legal prescriptions – *intended* to be used throughout the Yugoslav Kingdom. In what follows, I will examine to what extent these stimuli left a mark on the definition of collective identity in elementary school textbooks for national subjects which were published in Belgrade during the interwar period.

### Textbooks in the early interwar period (1920–27)

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<sup>35</sup> Quoted in Milić R. Majstorović, 'Problem udžbenika u narodnoj školi Kraljevine Jugoslavije', in *Pedagoška Jugoslavija*, ed. Milić R. Majstorović (Belgrade: Jugoslovensko učiteljsko udruženje, 1939), 209.

<sup>36</sup> See decree O.n.Br. 51450 in *Prosvetni glasnik* 53 (1937), 830–1.

<sup>37</sup> Milić R. Majstorović, 'Problem udžbenika', 210.

<sup>38</sup> For the approved textbooks see decree IV Br. 20004, *Prosvetni glasnik* 54 (1938), 1122.

<sup>39</sup> See decree IV Br. 5078, *Prosvetni glasnik* 55 (1939), 384.

<sup>40</sup> It goes beyond the scope of this article to present a detailed comparison of textbooks published in Ljubljana, Zagreb and Belgrade. The following analysis of Belgrade textbooks should suffice as a convincing illustration of the regional bias in these textbooks. See Jelavich, 'Education, Textbooks', 137–9 for a brief evaluation of the readers compiled by Sigismund Čajkovac, the most important author of elementary school textbooks for national subjects in Zagreb in the interwar period.

What immediately strikes the observer is the large number of textbooks for national subjects – readers, history and geography textbooks – which were published in the first half of the 1920s in Belgrade. Furthermore, there were great qualitative differences between these textbooks, a consequence of the absence of detailed guidelines concerning the teaching material which should be included in the textbooks. Immediately after the war revised editions of a number of pre-war Serbian textbooks, especially readers, were published.<sup>41</sup> Apart from some superficial adaptations – such as the change of the titles from ‘Serbian reader’ to simply ‘Reader’<sup>42</sup> – and the addition of a very small number of texts about Croatian or Slovenian symbolic resources, these readers held on to the strictly Serbian national imagery which had characterised pre-war readers. Thus, pupils read texts like ‘Our Fatherland’ by Sr. J. Stojković:

Serbs are distinguished from many other nations by their quickness and other mental characteristics. The Serbian language is beautiful and resonant, so that it can be measured with the most beautiful languages in the world. Our customs are worthy and the Orthodox faith is the most beautiful faith in the world.<sup>43</sup>

Of course, such a depiction of Serbian national identity was completely incompatible with Yugoslav national ideology, which propagated religious tolerance and equality, and unity of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes as equal ‘tribes’ of the Yugoslav nation.

The few additions of new material linked to the Croatian or Slovenian ‘tribe’, or the Yugoslav state, did not lead to the incorporation of Serbian collective identity within an overarching Yugoslav whole. Rather the inverse took place, as these new symbolic resources were simply included in a virtually unchanged definition of Serbian collective identity. In Protić and Stojanović’s reader for the fourth year, for example, a short chapter on the Slovenian tribe was added. The authors explained that ‘Slovenes [were] simply another name for our people living there’.<sup>44</sup> Their history could be treated very shortly, because they had never enjoyed political independence. In fact, the most significant historical event for the Slovenes was the recent liberation by the Serbian army.<sup>45</sup> Further, the authors clarified that ‘Slovenes speak the same language, because we are one nation. They have some different words, but that doesn’t mean that they have a different speech, rather we say that they have their own dialect’.<sup>46</sup> Hereafter a short story by Anton Slomšek in Slovenian was given, with some Serbo-Croatian translations in footnotes, which should clarify that Slovenia was indeed ‘just a dialect of the beautiful Serbian language’.<sup>47</sup> Clearly, information on the Slovenian tribe was reduced to a minimum, and appropriated as a rather insignificant element of Serbian collective identity.

Simultaneously with these revised editions of pre-war Serbian readers, a number of new textbooks was published in Belgrade, with more substantial adaptations to the new Yugoslav context. In the first place, the Yugoslav national idea took a prominent place in declamatory statements in the textbooks. In the readers pupils encountered numerous texts on the Yugoslav

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<sup>41</sup> I have analysed two series of revised readers published between 1921 and 1923: one compiled by Ljubomir Protić and Vladimir D. Stojanović, and a second by Uroš Blagojević and Mihailo Stanojević. Since it were precisely the readers compiled by Protić and Stojanović which Jelavich selected for his evaluation of interwar textbooks – not exactly a representative example, as I will argue in this article – a brief evaluation of these readers will suffice. Jelavich, ‘Education, Textbooks’, 133–7.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>43</sup> Mihailo Stanojević and Uroš Blagojević, *Čitanka za četvrti razred osnovnih škola* (Belgrade: Rajković i Ćuković, 1922), 41.

<sup>44</sup> Ljubomir Protić and Vlad. D. Stojanović, *Srpska čitanka za četvrti razred osnovnih škola u Kraljevini Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca* (Belgrade: Državna štamparija, 1923), 126.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 126–7.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

homeland and Yugoslav patriotism, and were taught that Serbs, Croats and Slovenes formed one nation, on the basis of their linguistic unity:

Until recently we have been slaves of other peoples: Turks, Germans and Hungarians. For a long time we have served them, because we did not agree. If the Slovenes and the Croats had been at Kosovo with the Serbs, we would have beaten the Turks and pushed them back to Asia; if the Serbs had helped the Croats and the Slovenes, the Germans and the Hungarians could not have forced them to obey them like slaves. We know that Serbs, Croats and Slovenes were one people in old times; and that today they still speak the same language, which proves that they are one nation, that they are brothers. We will love Croats and Slovenes like Serbs, and we will be happy that we are united and that we are a strong and great nation.<sup>48</sup>

Readers frequently included poems and short stories on solidarity and cooperation between brothers, which served as a metaphor to make the abstract concept of Serb-Croat-Slovene national unity more comprehensible to the pupils. In history textbooks Yugoslav national unity was historically underpinned by referring to the primordial unity of South Slavs as members of the Slavic race. It was argued that as a result of the migrations of the Slavs in different directions, several nations had been formed, amongst them the Yugoslavs, who were grouped in three tribes, Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

Another obvious adaptation to the new Yugoslav context was the attention paid to religious tolerance in textbooks. As clarified by Mihailo Jović, pupils 'should teach the illiterate and simple people, that Serbs, Croats and Slovenes are one nation, and that they are brothers and that we should love our brothers, regardless of religious differences'.<sup>49</sup> Readers included a large number of stories which proved that religious prejudices were unsustainable, as for example the story 'Three Faiths' about the children of a Serbian Orthodox, a Muslim and a Croatian Catholic family, who lived on the same island but never played together and gave each other bad names. One day the oldest daughter of each family was kidnapped by pirates, and on the ship they gradually got to know each other. After the daughters had been rescued, it was explained to them that they belonged to one nation, because they spoke the same Serbo-Croatian language.<sup>50</sup>

You are three sisters even though you each have a different religion. Your grandparents were brothers, but some of them learned to pray to God like Italians, other like the Greeks, and still other like the Turks. As they learned it, so did their children and you. And this is not bad. Let everybody pray to God as he wishes and knows. But it is bad to hate each other, to quarrel and to make each other ugly, as if you don't know that you are of the same blood and family, that you are sisters and brothers.<sup>51</sup>

The idea of religious tolerance, at least between Catholics and Orthodox, also took a prominent place in the history textbooks, where pupils learned that the Yugoslavs had initially all had the same pagan beliefs, and later jointly converted to the Christian faith under the spiritual leadership of St. Cyril and St. Methodius. It was only because of growing discord between Rome and Constantinople that Yugoslavs became divided between Catholics and Orthodox.

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<sup>48</sup> Mihailo Jović, *Čitanka za četvrti razred osnovnih škola* (Belgrade: Geca Kon, 1921), 29.

<sup>49</sup> Mihailo Jović, *Srpska istorija sa kratkim istorijom Hrvata i Slovenaca za četvrti razred osnovnih škola* (Belgrade: Geca Kon, 1921), 13.

<sup>50</sup> Note that the language was termed Serbo-Croatian and no longer Serbian.

<sup>51</sup> Jović, *Čitanka za četvrti razred*, 44.



Apart from these general, declamatory texts on Yugoslav national unity and religious tolerance, textbooks also added symbolic resources from Croatian and Slovenian language (variants), history and geography. In the readers, pupils were familiarised with different variants of the Serbo-Croatian language, through the addition of a considerable number of texts in the Latin alphabet, and the ijekavian dialect, and extracts from Croatian authors. Pupils were familiarised with Slovenian, through the inclusion of a number of Slovenian poems, with Serbo-Croatian translations of difficult words. In practice, textbooks accepted the distinct character of the Slovenian dialect/language. Milorad Vujanac, for example, explicitly recognised that Slovenes were ‘quite different from Serbs and Croats with regard to language’.<sup>52</sup> For history, textbooks followed the ministerial decree of 26 July 1920, in which Minister of Education Svetozar Pribičević prescribed that in the fourth year of elementary schools in pre-war Serbia, Vojvodina and Montenegro, the pre-war Serbian curriculum should be complemented with short overviews of the history of Croats and Slovenes, and especially ‘the period of their independent life’.<sup>53</sup> For the Slovenes textbooks typically treated King Samo, the 7<sup>th</sup> century ruler of a union of Slavic tribes, amongst which Slavs in present-day Carinthia, and the specific inauguration ritual of Carantanian dukes, referring to the independent ‘Slovenian’ state of Carantania in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> century. For the Croats a first important episode was the rule of Ljudevit posavski, Duke of Pannonian Croatia in the first half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, who organised a rebellion against the Franks with the support of Carantanians (Slovenes) and the tribe of Timočani (Serbs), and was therefore glorified as the first ruler of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Further, an overview was given of the medieval Croatian kingdom, and especially its most successful king, Tomislav, and the last ‘national’ king, Petar Svačić. Hereafter Croats and Slovenes had experienced no more ‘independent life’ – in the sense of an ‘own’ independent state – so it was up to the textbook authors to decide whether or not information on their later history would be included. In Mihailo Jović’s history textbook no further information was given, Dragoljub Ilić included some isolated historical events from Croatian and Slovenian history, such as the 16<sup>th</sup> century peasant revolt under Matija Gubec, the Slovenian Protestant reformer Primož Trubar, the 17<sup>th</sup> century conspiracy against the Habsburg throne by Croatian nobles Petar Zrinski and Krsto Frankopan, the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Illyrian movement, and the military campaigns under Ban Jelačić against the Hungarian revolutionaries in 1848.<sup>54</sup> For geography, readers and geography textbooks expanded their territorial scope to the entire Yugoslav Kingdom, by adding general overviews and references to the state as a whole, and including brief descriptions of the regions in the state that had not belonged to the pre-war Serbian Kingdom.

Although significant additions were thus included with regard to the Yugoslav state and nation, and the Croatian and Slovenian tribe, Serbian collective identity clearly occupied a privileged position in the textbooks. More pages were devoted to Serbian authors, more texts were given in the Cyrillic alphabet, when textbooks treated religious symbols or acts they were almost exclusively deduced from Serbian Orthodoxy, and Serbian historical events and regions occupied almost two thirds of the historical and geographical overview. Vujanac’s geography textbook, for example, devoted 20 pages to regions outside pre-war Serbia, against 43 for pre-war Serbia. In Dragoljub Ilić’s history textbook only 17 pages on a total of 124 were devoted to non-Serbian historical events. In a chapter with the telling title ‘Religion and Customs’ Stanojević and Stefanović included texts on the Serbian Orthodox Saints Sava and Lazar, the Serbian Orthodox celebration of Christmas and Easter, and *slava*, the traditional celebration of patron saints, strongly linked to Serbian collective identity. The addition of

<sup>52</sup> Milorad Vujanac, *Zemljopis za četvrti razred osnovnih škola* (Belgrade: Geca Kon, 1923), 81.

<sup>53</sup> Tešić, *Sto godina*, 100.

<sup>54</sup> Dragoljub Ilić, *Narodna istorija Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca* (Belgrade: Rajković i Ćuković, 1925), 69–72, 88–90, 96–7.

Dinko Šimunović's 'Christmas in a Monastery', which portrayed a Catholic who attended a Christmas service in an Orthodox monastery was a rather meaningless compensation for the focus on Serbian Orthodoxy.<sup>55</sup> However, such a strong regional bias should not be considered problematic *per se*, as has been clarified by Kennedy in her study of Wilhelmine German readers. What was more problematic, was that Serbian collective identity was delineated and defined in precisely the same way as in pre-war textbooks. Furthermore, the boundary mechanism which was used to construct Serbian collective identity was also applied to define Yugoslav collective identity in the textbooks, as illustrated in the historical overviews, the structure of which completely corresponded to the traditional interpretation of Serbian national history. By focusing on political independence, the Yugoslav state was narrowly linked to the Serbian medieval empire and 19<sup>th</sup> century independent Serbia, leading to the impression that Croats and Slovenes had not made any significant contributions to Yugoslav history. The problem was that the focus on 'periods of independent life' could hardly serve as a common denominator toward other parts of the Yugoslav nation, because it left little room for interpretations that could point at Croatian or Slovenian contributions to Yugoslav history, apart from relatively short periods of independence in medieval times.

This approach also led to elements which contradicted the declamatory equality of different religious traditions within the Yugoslav nation. Whereas, as we have already seen, religious tolerance took a prominent place in the textbooks under scrutiny, the Yugoslav nation remained essentially defined as a Christian nation. Throughout the textbooks, barely any attention was given to Yugoslav Muslims, and when they were treated, they were frequently interpreted as an internal Other, who were religiously linked to the Ottoman Empire, the great enemy of the Serbs, and, by extension, of the Yugoslavs. In a text on Sarajevo in Mihailo Stanojević and Živko Stefanović's reader for the fourth year, for example, the compilers included some remarks in which they called Islam the Turkish faith, and explained that Allah was the Turkish God.<sup>56</sup> In Sima Milutinović Sarajlija's 'For Faith' a Serbian hero refused to take on the 'Turkish faith' and exclaimed: 'There is no faith better than the Christian'.<sup>57</sup> Clearly, the persistent strong link between religion and national identity would not serve as viable common denominator for a definition of a Yugoslav collective identity which could overarch religious frictions among Yugoslavs.

Finally, textbooks under scrutiny maintained a strict delineation of Serbian collective identity. This was especially obvious in the strict demarcation between tribal territories in the geographical imagination of Yugoslavia. Beside the pre-war Serbian Kingdom, Vojvodina and Montenegro, Serbian territories also included Bosnia-Herzegovina and Dalmatia, mixed regions which were claimed by both Serbs and Croats. In his geography textbook Vujanac was clear: 'Bosnians are Serbs. They are Christians and Muslims. Christians are divided in Orthodox and Catholics'.<sup>58</sup> About the Dalmatian population, Vujanac argued that, apart from the Italians in the cities and on the islands, 'all Dalmatians are Serbs. Serbs of the Catholic faith call themselves Croats, and they form a majority. But they all speak the Serbian language'.<sup>59</sup> The Serbian character of Bosnia and Dalmatia was further underpinned in history textbooks, which argued that when the Yugoslavs arrived in the Balkans, the Serbian tribe had

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<sup>55</sup> Stanojević and Stefanović, *Čitanka za četvrti razred*, 3–16. Šimunović's story was also included in Sigismund Čajkovac's 'Croatian' reader. Sigismund Čajkovac, *Čitanka za četvrti razred osnovnih škola u Kraljevini Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca* (Zagreb: Narodne novine, 1926), 131. The fact that a Catholic attended an Orthodox liturgy of course carried a different meaning depending on the religious target group of the textbooks, in Čajkovac's case primarily Catholics, for Stanojević and Stefanović Orthodox.

<sup>56</sup> Stanojević and Stefanović, *Čitanka za četvrti razred*, 77.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 120. The verb used for conversion to Islam was 'poturčiti se' which can literally be translated as 'to become Turkish'.

<sup>58</sup> Vujanac, *Zemljopis*, 66–7.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 72.

settled in Southern Serbia, Montenegro, Herzegovina, Bosnia, Dalmatia, Macedonia, the lands east of the Morava river, and Vojvodina. Croats had settled in Croatia and Slavonia, and together with the Serbs in Dalmatia and western Bosnia.<sup>60</sup> Such a strict delineation of ‘tribal belongings’ almost inevitably led to contentions over mixed areas, and had little potential as a common denominator for the imagination of Yugoslav nationhood.

### **Textbooks under the Dictatorship: exemplary Yugoslavism?**

When evaluating textbooks of the 1920s, it should not be forgotten that these were not intended to be used in the entire Yugoslav state. This changed after the establishment of the Dictatorship, when educational authorities introduced more elaborate instructions with regard to the definition of Yugoslav national identity in textbooks, which were intended to be used statewide. In what follows I will examine how these guidelines were concretised in textbooks published in Belgrade during the 1930s. I will assess to what extent these textbooks succeeded in avoiding the problematic elements resulting from the Serbian bias that had so strongly characterised textbooks published in Belgrade in the 1920s, and providing common denominators which could unite, or better, *appear to* unite different collective identities available in the interwar Yugoslav Kingdom.

The omnipresence of the ideology of integral Yugoslavism during the Royal Dictatorship – symbolically reflected in the change of the name of the state from Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes to Kingdom of Yugoslavia on 3 October 1929<sup>61</sup> – fully came to expression in the discourse used in textbooks published in Belgrade during the 1930s. From the first year of elementary education pupils read texts about Yugoslav national unity, brotherly love and solidarity between Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and the virtue of patriotism. However, how was this notion of Yugoslav national unity further developed in the textbooks?

As for language, Serbo-Croatian linguistic unity was not questioned, but different literary traditions were accepted and equally represented. With regard to alphabet, the readers for the first two years were published in two versions, one for each alphabet. In the third year, the pupils were introduced to a second alphabet, and both alphabets were used alternately. With regard to the canonisation of national literature, folk literature, which had a rich tradition throughout the South Slav lands, was ubiquitous in the readers as a ‘national treasure’ which had kept the nation alive in times of foreign oppression, and should therefore be studied as a ‘road sign for life’.<sup>62</sup> Further, readers presented a balanced overview of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Serbian, Croatian – and to a lesser extent Slovenian – authors. Especially the children’s poems by the Serb Jovan Jovanović Zmaj and the Croat Vladimir Nazor were popular in all readers. Although textbooks continued to proclaim the linguistic unity of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes as the cornerstone for Yugoslav national unity, in practice Slovenian was recognised as a distinct South Slav language. All readers included a small number of poems and texts in Slovenian with Serbo-Croatian translations of unknown words. Additionally, many authors spoke about the distinct character of Slovenian. Mladenović’s reader for the fourth year included a chapter on Slovenia and the Slovenes, which spoke of the Slovenian language and argued that Serbs and Croats spoke a language which was similar to Slovenian, and was easily understandable for them, but not completely identical.<sup>63</sup> Milovanović and Milošević’s readers included some theoretical grammatical explanations, which explained that Serbo-Croatian

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<sup>60</sup> Jović, *Srpska istorija*, 4.

<sup>61</sup> This shift in nomination also occurred in textbooks, where the standard phrase ‘Serbs, Croats and Slovenes’ was consequently replaced by ‘Yugoslavs’ or ‘Our nation’.

<sup>62</sup> Atanasije Mladenović, *Čitanka za treći razred osnovnih škola u Kraljevini Jugoslavije* (Belgrade: Jovanović i Vujić, 1940), 20–1.

<sup>63</sup> Atanasije Mladenović, *Čitanka za četvrti razred osnovnih škola u Kraljevini Jugoslavije* (Belgrade: Jovanović i Vujić, 1940), 135–6.

was the national language of Serbs and Croats, and that Slovenes spoke a language which was only slightly different from Serbo-Croatian.<sup>64</sup> In geography textbooks too, authors frequently pointed at the distinct character of the language spoken in Drava banovina.<sup>65</sup> With regard to language there was clearly a great gap between the stereotypical discourse on the integral unity of the Yugoslav language, and the concrete allowance for linguistic variation. It was precisely the variability, the 'emptiness' of this definition of Yugoslav linguistic unity, the fact that it could mean different things to different people, which made it a potentially viable common denominator.

For the definition of Yugoslav history, curricula had presented a more binding list of historical episodes and figures, which reduced the degree of variability in textbooks. In history textbooks for the third year, the Serbian state tradition continued to form the core of Yugoslav national history. In the curriculum of 1927 short additions on periods of 'independent life' among Croats and Slovenes during the Middle Ages had been included, so that for this period attention was paid to attempts to establish national states by first the Slovenes, then the Croats and finally also the Serbs. However, it was clearly the Serbian medieval state which received most attention. Milan Rabrenović treated Slovenian independence on pages 25–27, the Croatian medieval state on 27–29, and Serbian medieval rulers on pages 30–62.<sup>66</sup> In the 1933 curriculum these additions on Slovenian and Croatian independent life were deleted, so that the domination of Serbian state history became even more outspoken. Dušan Prica's textbook for the third year for example perfectly followed the curriculum and consisted of the following chapters: St. Cyril and St. Methodius (pages 7–10); St. Sava (11–24); Kraljević Marko (25–34); Prince Lazar (34–47); Nikola Zrinski (47–50); Karađorđe (51–74); Josip Juraj Strossmayer (76–77); King Petar I and King Aleksandar (78–92).<sup>67</sup> Of these figures, only Nikola Zrinski, a 16<sup>th</sup> century Croatian nobleman who heroically fought the Ottomans at Siget, and Josip Juraj Strossmayer, Catholic Bishop, cultural benefactor and politician from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, were primarily linked to Croatian history.

In textbooks for the fourth year this core structure was supplemented with a large number of historical events and figures from Croatian and Slovenian history, not only linked to their independent medieval states, but also to periods under Hungarian and Habsburg rule. The final result was a relatively equal representation of Serbian and Croatian historical events. Slovenian history remained underrepresented in the textbooks, although it received significantly more attention in comparison to earlier textbooks, with chapters on the counts of Celje, an important aristocratic family in the Habsburg Empire in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Protestant movement under the leadership of Primož Trubar, and the Slovenian cultural rebirth in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was in these textbooks for the fourth year that attempts were made to include non-Serbian historical traditions as meaningful parts of Yugoslav national history. Textbooks did not simply enumerate isolated Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian historical events, but provided a narrative which bound together these historical episodes as manifestations of a common Yugoslav national history. It was precisely in this underlying narrative that a new mechanism for the definition of Yugoslav history was applied, which

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<sup>64</sup> Svetomir Milovanović and Jovan Milošević, *Čitanka sa gramatikom za treći razred osnovnih škola* (Belgrade: Geca Kon, 1938), 17–18.

<sup>65</sup> Drava banovina (capital: Ljubljana) comprised the Slovenian lands in the kingdom. It was the only banovina which left historical boundaries intact, indicative of the distinct position Slovenia continued to occupy in Yugoslavia.

<sup>66</sup> Milan Rabrenović, *Istorija našega naroda za treći razred osnovnih škola* (Belgrade: Rajković i Ćuković, 1930).

<sup>67</sup> Dušan Prica, *Istorija jugoslovenskog naroda (Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca) za treći razred osnovnih škola* (Belgrade: Jovanović i Vujić, 1938).

provided alternatives for the Serb-centred focus on independent state traditions, and the often controversial delineation between tribal histories and territories. In practice, textbooks emphasised the parallelisms and common historical experiences which linked Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian history. The battle of Kosovo, for example, was no longer an exclusive and unique Serbian historical event. It was portrayed as a joint Yugoslav battle, in which ‘Serbs and Croats stood next to each other, shoulder by shoulder, in the battle against the enemy’.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, the Croats too had had their ‘Kosovo’, namely the 1493 battle at Krbava field in which a Croatian army fought against the Ottomans. The 14<sup>th</sup> century Bosnian King Tvrtko, who gradually acquired Serbian and Croatian lands, was canonised as the self-conscious unifier of Serbs and Croats: ‘The first wish of Tvrtko was to unite as many Serbs and Croats as possible in one state. ... He knew that Serbs and Croats are one nation, so he attempted to establish his power in the three largest regions inhabited by Serbs and Croats, Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia’.<sup>69</sup> Thus, instead of just one of the medieval Serbian states, Tvrtko’s kingdom became a joint Serb-Croat predecessor of the Yugoslav Kingdom. For 19<sup>th</sup> century history, textbooks presented clusters of historical events and figures which were interpreted as parallel expression of the national awakening of the Yugoslavs across state boundaries. Thus, the establishment of the Illyrian provinces, comprising Slovenia, Croatia-Slavonia and Dalmatia, under Napoleon was included in between the treatment of the two Serbian uprisings of 1804 and 1815, as parallel starting points of the Yugoslav national revival. For the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century textbooks treated the further strengthening of the Yugoslav national idea under Prince Mihailo Obrenović in Serbia, Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer among the Croats and the publicist and politician Janez Bleiweis among the Slovenes. Clearly, an approach focusing on parallelism and common experiences offered more possibilities to accommodate different historical traditions within an overarching Yugoslav narrative, in comparison to the more restricted focus on state independence which was still applied in curricula and textbooks for the third year.

For the geographical representation of the Yugoslav nation and state, curricula and regulations had prescribed that the new regional division of the country in banovinas should be followed, leaving considerable room for different interpretations. In the textbooks under scrutiny this new structure led to a significant shift in the selection and organisation of symbolic resources for the geographical imagination of the Yugoslav nation. For all banovinas equal information was given on sites of natural beauty (especially lakes, mountains, rivers, spas), climate, relief, rivers, agriculture, industry, roads, population and important historical monuments. Also, attention was paid to the capital cities of the banovinas, with references to important cultural institutions, architectural monuments et cetera. Belgrade, which formed a special administrative unit, was invariably represented as the capital of Yugoslavia, and no longer as the centre of the Serbian tribe, as had been the case in textbooks of the 1920s. A first result of this new approach was that a balanced overview of different regions in Yugoslavia was given, which avoided the problematic delineation between tribal territories. Moreover, the banovina structure provided a framework in which local and regional symbolic resources, which had hitherto only received marginal attention as peripheral elements in the imagination of one of the Yugoslav tribes, could be directly appropriated within Yugoslav national identity. Thus, in the treatment of Vardar (capital: Skopje), Drina (Sarajevo) and Vrbas (Banja Luka) banovina attention was paid to symbolic resources linked to its Muslim population. In the imagination of Zeta banovina (Cetinje) the Montenegrin state tradition occupied a central role. For Coastal banovina (Split)

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<sup>68</sup> Živojin Đorđević and Dragoljub Stanjaković, *Istorija Jugoslovena za četvrti razred osnovne škole* (Belgrade: Geca Kon, 1940), 40.

<sup>69</sup> Milan Rabrenović, *Istorija našega naroda za četvrti razred osnovnih škola* (Belgrade: Rajković i Ćuković, 1931), 41.

textbooks pointed at the important economic and cultural role the sea played for the population, and referred to the history of Dalmatian Croatia. Additionally, whereas in earlier textbooks the nation had been primarily imagined against a traditionalistic and rural background, in the 1930s attention was increasingly paid to elements linked to urban life and modernisation, with references to large factories, new schools, railroad connections, and the general economic progress made after the World War, features directly linked to the 'now' of the shared Yugoslav state.

Although the geographical division in banovinas thus clearly created possibilities for a new approach to Yugoslav geography, in practice the textbooks under scrutiny also continued to rely on established 'tribal' symbolic resources. Especially through references to historically defined sites Serb-centred categories of perception persisted, clarifying the limited degree of 'invention' in the actual imagination of banovinas. Again, the Serbian state tradition – and its link with the Serbian Orthodox Church – played a dominant role in the imagination of a majority of the banovinas, namely Drina, Danube (Novi Sad), Morava (Niš) and Vardar. For the latter, the commemoration of the Balkan Wars and the First World War served as an additional strong link with Serbian collective identity.<sup>70</sup> Zeta banovina was firmly linked to the Serbian kingdom of Montenegro, especially through its capital Cetinje, and the figure of Petar Petrović Njegoš, the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century writer and Prince-Bishop of Montenegro. As a counterweight to these 'Serbian' banovinas, Sava (Zagreb) and Coastal banovina were linked to Croatian state tradition. Drava banovina occupied a specific place as the 'Slovenian' banovina. Cvetko Popović for example explicitly argued that the population of Drava banovina was predominantly Yugoslav, 'and more specifically Slovenian', 'which was why it was also called Slovenia'.<sup>71</sup> The only truly 'mixed' banovina was Vrbas banovina, for which textbooks pointed at the medieval Bosnian state, but also Serbian and Croatian historical traditions, respectively Petar Mrkonjić, the pseudonym the later King Petar Karađorđević adopted when he fought in the Bosnian revolts of 1875–76, and the Croatian noble family Zrinski.

As we have seen, one of the most problematic elements in the imagination of the Yugoslav nation in earlier Serbian textbooks was the strong link between religion and national identity. In textbooks of the 1930s significantly more attention was paid to different religions among the South Slavs. In order to de-emphasise religious dichotomies, however, textbooks strongly relied on the model of 'national churches'. Most textbooks of the 1930s continued to stress the national role of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Without exception St. Sava, the first archbishop of the Serbian autocephalous church in 1219, was glorified as the first 'Enlightener' of the Serbian people, and served as the symbol of the nationally conscious Serbian church. Further, readers also continued to point at folkloric traditions linked to Serbian Orthodoxy as manifestations of national identity. Mladenović's readers for example included texts by Vuk Karadžić on the *slava* feasts and the Serbian Orthodox celebration of Christmas, as well as texts about the celebration of the saint's days of St. Nicholas and St. George, and Easter.<sup>72</sup> A whole chapter in the reader for the fourth year was devoted to Serbian Orthodox monasteries, which were praised as 'eternal monuments of the greatness of our nation'.<sup>73</sup> In order to de-emphasise the dichotomy between Orthodoxy and Catholicism, textbooks transferred the portrayal of the Serbian Orthodox Church as a national institution to the South Slav Catholic Church, presenting it as an *authentically* national church. Crucial

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<sup>70</sup> Vardar banovina roughly comprised Macedonia, Southern Serbia and Eastern Kosovo. On this territory the Serbian army had fought many important battles during the Balkan Wars and the First World War.

<sup>71</sup> Cvetko Popović, *Zemljopis Kraljevine Jugoslavije za četvrti razred osnovnih škola* (Belgrade: Geca Kon, 1939), 11.

<sup>72</sup> Mladenović, *Čitanka za treći razred*, 45–53.

<sup>73</sup> Mladenović, *Čitanka za četvrti razred*, 74.

symbolic figures were the 19<sup>th</sup> century Croatian Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer, who served as the personification of national consciousness and religious tolerance among Catholics, and the 9<sup>th</sup> century Bishop Gregory of Nin, a proponent of the use of Slavonic in liturgy in medieval Croatia, who was appropriated as the martyr for the national character of the medieval Croatian church. With Primož Trubar the Slovenes had their equivalent for St. Sava and Gregory of Nin: ‘Just like the Slavic apostles St. Cyril and St. Methodius fought for Slavic liturgy, and like St. Sava fought for the church in Serbia and Gregory of Nin in Croatia – Primož Trubar did in Slovenia’.<sup>74</sup> The problem with such an interpretation of the Catholic Church was that it implicitly imposed a comparison between the two Christian Churches in favour of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The underlying message was that the use of Latin and the strict dependence on Rome had in fact alienated the Croatian church from its authentic national character. In the reader of Magarašević and Ognjanović for example a text by Tihomir Ostojić was included in which the author listed the Latin church – among German, Venetian or Turkish oppressors – as an institution which had, unsuccessfully, attempted to ‘wipe away’ Croatian collective identity.<sup>75</sup>

As far as the dichotomy Islam-Christianity was concerned, textbooks attempted to incorporate South Slav Muslims as a constituent part of the Yugoslav nation by including positive symbolic resources linked to South Slav Muslims, and by avoiding the opposition between Christian Yugoslavs and Muslim Ottomans which had characterised earlier Serbian textbooks. Milanović and Milošević, for example, not only paid attention to Christmas, but also included a text in which a young boy prepared for Bairam.<sup>76</sup> In his geographical overview, Matović explicitly pointed at the Ottoman character of cities like Skopje, Sarajevo and Banja Luka, including illustrations of mosques and minarets, and presented a more positive image of the Ottoman rule in Bosnia by stressing the role some South Slav Muslims had played in the Ottoman administration and government.<sup>77</sup> History textbooks added two historical episodes linked to the history of South Slav Muslims which had been included in the 1933 curriculum for history, namely the conversion to Islam among South Slavs, and Mehmed Sokolović, the 16<sup>th</sup> century Grand Vizier of the Ottoman Empire who was of Bosnian South Slav origin. In the elaboration of these historical episodes, textbooks firmly linked South Slav Muslims to Serbian collective identity, a persistent form of Serbian bias.<sup>78</sup> It was explained that a significant part of the South Slavs had converted to Islam for ‘worldly’ reasons, but had not changed their Serbian consciousness that way. Đorđević and Stanjaković first gave a historical overview of Islam, and then explained that some South Slavs converted to Islam in order to keep their belongings and wealth.<sup>79</sup> However,

those citizens who changed their faith could not also change their nationality. Christians who had taken the Muslim faith did not become Turks, although they took over Turkish clothes and way of living. What is most important, they kept their mother tongue and many Serbian national customs.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Rabrenović, *Istorija našega naroda za četvrti razred*, 84.

<sup>75</sup> Andrija Ognjanović and Branko Magarašević, *Čitanka za četvrti razred osnovnih škola* (Belgrade: Državna štamparija, 1939), 147.

<sup>76</sup> Milovanović and Milošević, *Čitanka sa gramatikom za treći razred*, 55–7.

<sup>77</sup> Miloš Matović, *Čitanka za treći razred osnovnih škola u Kraljevini Jugoslavije* (Belgrade: J.J. Dželebdžić, 193?), 91–3, 105–10, 111–4.

<sup>78</sup> Pre-First World War Serbian and Croatian textbooks had integrated Bosnian Muslims within their own nation, thus expressing conflicting Serbian and Croatian claims on Bosnia and its population. Jelavich, *South Slav Nationalisms*, 89–92, 152–4, 164–7.

<sup>79</sup> Đorđević and Stanjaković, *Istorija Jugoslovena za četvrti razred*, 51–2.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 52. Radiša Stefanović’s claim that Bosnian Muslims ‘continued to speak their mother tongue, but because of their faith (...) soon forgot their nationality, and protected Islam and chased away Christians’,

This was also illustrated in the historical interpretation of Mehmed Sokolović, who allegedly ‘never forgot his Serbian origin’,<sup>81</sup> and had therefore helped to re-establish the Serbian Patriarchate, which was stressed in all history textbooks as Sokolović’s most important historical deed.

To conclude, the fact that the textbooks under scrutiny were intended for use in all Serbo-Croatian speaking areas of Yugoslavia clearly left its mark on the definition of collective identity they proposed. First, an obvious attempt was made to present a more equal selection of symbolic resources linked to different traditions (historical, linguistic, religious, geographical), which were recognised as parts of the Yugoslav nation. Furthermore, textbooks also employed mechanisms which reshaped sub-national collective identities, especially through references to links and parallelisms between different historical traditions, and the introduction of banovinas as neutral geographical categories. At the same time, however, some persisting elements of Serbian bias made these textbooks unsuitable for use in the entire Yugoslav kingdom, precisely because their close reliance on Serbian collective identity provided too little room for potential multifaceted interpretations. In the end, then, the most significant development in these textbooks was that they provided common denominators that could mediate between Serbian collective identity and a Yugoslav idea which recognised diversity within national unity.

## Conclusion

With regard to the first question put forward in the introduction, it can be concluded that elementary school textbooks for national subjects published in Belgrade during the interwar period were characterised by what could be termed *imaginative interaction* between the Yugoslav ideological context and the definition of Serbian national identity which had been well-established in pre-war Serbian textbooks. On the one hand, this established definition of Serbian collective identity clearly shaped the imagination of Yugoslav collective identity in the textbooks under scrutiny. As we have seen, the textbooks attempted to ‘make sense’ of the Yugoslav nation by making use of mechanisms which had been applied in the pre-war imagination of Serbian identity – most enduringly the historical narrative of independent statehood and a nationally conscious church – for the imagination of Yugoslav collective identity and the appropriation of non-Serbian symbolic resources.<sup>82</sup> On the other hand, adaptations to the Yugoslav ideological context – which in the first place consisted of the inclusion of an increasing number of non-Serbian symbolic resources in the textbooks and the provision of an underlying narrative which established links and zones of overlap between constituent parts of the Yugoslav nation – led to the reshaping of Serbian collective identity, in the sense that it was embedded within an overarching Yugoslav whole which allowed for linguistic, historical, religious and regional diversity. In other words, and here I come to the second research question put forward in the introduction, the clear-cut boundaries and deterministic definition of Serbian collective identity were challenged by common denominators which allowed for diversity and zones of overlap within national unity. It can be hypothesised that this more open approach to collective identity, and the potential variability and fluidity within Yugoslav collective identity this brought with it, created opportunities for viable regional or sub-national interpretations of Yugoslav national identity other than the

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although an exception, clarifies that not all authors agreed with the more positive depiction of South Slav Muslims. Radiša Stefanović, *Istorija za četvrti razred osnovnih škola* (Belgrade: Privreda, 1938), 33.

<sup>81</sup> Dušan Prica, *Istorija jugoslovenskog naroda za četvrti razred osnovne škole* (Belgrade: Jovanović and Vujić, 1937), 81.

<sup>82</sup> The idea that sub-national places ‘make sense’ of the nation was put forward by Celia Applegate, ‘A Europe of Regions’, 1177.



Serbian view in the textbooks discussed in this article, certainly in the fields of language, geography and history. As I have argued, only the interpretation of Yugoslav religions as national religions was less likely to generate viable narratives that could integrate the Catholic Church or the South Slav Muslim community within a Yugoslav religious community. Let it be clear, however, that these final remarks have a purely hypothetical character and will need to be substantiated by further research.