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ALEXANDER THE GREAT IN 19th CENTURY SERBIAN HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

Abstract: Alexander the Great (356 B.C – 323 B.C) has gone down in history as one of the greatest conquerors of Antiquity. By the time he was 30, he had conquered most of the known world. The territory under his control lay from Greece in the west, southward through Egypt and eastward to India. His military successes made him an inspiration to many writers of his time and later. Since his life span corresponds to the era that today we call Hellenism, he is mentioned in all the educational systems of Europe. From their first appearance on this continent, school books have alluded to Alexander and his conquests. The first history textbooks in the Serbian language emerged in Serbia in the mid-19th century and they, too, included Alexander the Great. In this paper, we shall show how the history of Alexander was taught at the time and how his feats influenced generations of Serbian children educated at the first schools founded in the areas of the Habsburg Empire that they inhabited.

Keywords: Alexander the Great, history textbooks, Serbian schools, 19th century, antiquity.

It is in the nature of things that history textbooks reflect the spirit of the age in which they are written, since they are an important element of the education process. Ljubinka Trgovčević has noted that the social role of education in the 19th century was to provide and diffuse knowledge as a foundation for the economic, cultural and political development of a people.¹ The role of history as a school subject was based on the development of historical awareness and history as a branch of knowledge, closely connected to the 19th century development of national states.² George Pickering demonstrates how widespread and enduring in European tradition is the understanding that a primary goal of education is the development and reinforcement of virtue, morals and an attitude towards life, since they give society a sense of common purpose.³ All the above may be found in a report on the work of the Teacher Training School in Sombor of 1873 which clearly states: ‘Ancient History must pay special attention to the cultural development of all Antiquity as well as to

¹ Trgovčević 1994: 217–218.

² Koljanin 2013: 28.

³ Pickering 1971: 48

the geography of individual countries, [...] the great personalities of the ancient world and their feats should set an example to the young pupils of this school'.⁴

The development of education in the Serb-inhabited areas was to a large extent influenced by the fact that for a long time Serbs did not have their own country, and even when it emerged, many of them did not live in it. The fate of the Serbian people south of the rivers Sava and Danube in the early 19th century was primarily linked to the struggle for liberation from the Ottomans. In southern Hungary, it depended on a political struggle for spiritual, national and political survival within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Part of this battle to preserve national identity was the founding of Serbian schools, which began in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. These schools were: the Teacher Training School in Sombor founded in 1778, the Gymnasium (High School) at Sremski Karlovci, known as the Karlovačka Gimnazija and founded in 1791, followed in 1794 by the Theological School, also in Sremski Karlovci, and the Novi Sad Gymnasium founded in 1810.⁵ These schools were the highest level to which Serbian students could be educated.

Since the appearance of the first history textbooks in Europe, Alexander the Great and his conquests were studied. In the middle of the 19th century with the Serbs there appear the first history textbooks in Serbian language, and Alexander the Great also found his place in them. The aim of this paper is to show in which way Alexander the Great was studied in Serbian schools and how his feats influenced the generations of Serbian pupils who were educated in Serbian schools founded on the territory of Habsburg Monarchy. The present study is divided into two parts. The first examines the place of the ancient past and the image of Alexander the Great in Serbian textbooks. One focus of this analysis will be to examine the influence of foreign literature on their development and the image they present of Alexander the Great. The second examines textbooks in the context of how history was taught at the time. The reason for this is that this study does not set out to find a 'smoking gun' which would prove how the textbook image of Alexander the Great was used to raise awareness of a Serbian national identity. In any case, such evidence would be impossible to find, as the Habsburg Monarchy exercised a form of censure of school books. The authorities scrutinised texts translated from foreign languages into German⁶ and vice versa - those translated from German into the languages of the nations living within the Empire. Control of the textbooks used in Serbian schools on Hungarian territory became particularly evident following the Austro-Hungarian agreement of 1867.⁷ As the study of Hungarian language and history from the 1860s onward was an important instrument of Magyarisation, any attempt at opposing this was seen as undesirable. Where state-imposed censorship exists, the emergence of auto-censorship is inevitable. Each author had to bear in mind that the authorities in Vienna and Budapest controlled textbook content through the Ministry of Education, which would certainly not approve any propagation of nationalist tendencies detrimental to either constitutive nation. Therefore writers had to adjust their views and opinions to what was deemed acceptable by the relevant government bodies, or risk not

⁴ ASANUK, no. 29.I.

⁵ Pušibrk 1896; Kostić 1938; Stajić 1949; Makarić 1978; Gavrilović 1986; Petrović 1991; Boškov 2007b; Boškov 2008; Boškov 2009.

⁶ Wolf 2002: 45–61.

⁷ Stajić 1949: 322, 347–351.

having their books approved. There were only two ways, therefore, to promote a national agenda: first was for the book to be published in the language of the people for whom it was intended and, secondly, by selecting and accentuating historical topics which could immediately be identified with national strivings. As already explained, the textbooks and their image of Alexander the Great in the second part of this paper will be in the context of how history was taught at the time.

1. Antiquity and the image of Alexander the Great in Serbian textbooks

1.1. Antiquity in Serbian textbooks

The first history textbooks in the Serbian language were published in the 1840s,⁸ their authors being either teachers in Serbian schools or alumni of these schools who continued their education at European universities. The content of most of them dealt with the Antique Age, since it was considered that the education of the Serbian people should be founded on Antique principles.⁹ Up to the late 19th century, they were crucially influenced by German history books. The reason for this was that most of the authors writing in Serbian had been educated at the universities of Munich, Vienna and Budapest where German historiography wielded the greatest weight and was a major influence in Europe of the time. Here we can single out German author Wilhelm Pütz's influential *Historische Darstellungen und Charakteristiken für Schule und Haus*. His textbook model is very noticeable in the layout of lesson units in Serbian schoolbooks. The presentation of ancient peoples is also ordered according to Pütz's geographical principle.¹⁰ In the bibliographies of certain Serbian history books, we can see that in the list of literature consulted in their writing, pride of place is given to Wilhelm Pütz.¹¹

The education provided in all Serbian schools of the 19th century was a classical one. In first place came the study of classical languages (Latin and Greek), followed by ancient history, which took up over 50% of the lessons in general history.¹² The ancient past was also present in the study of Christianity, biblical history,¹³ geography, archaeology, ethics, rhetoric and poetry.¹⁴ It was only at the end of the 19th century that circumstances changed, but Antiquity never occupied less than a third of the history lessons.

Domination by the classics in Serbian education was instigated by the German system with which educated Serbs were well acquainted. It was initiated by Wilhelm von Humboldt, linguist, philosopher, diplomat, and Prussian minister of education in the first

⁸ For the first history textbooks in Serbian schools in the 19th century containing lessons from the classical era, see: Boškov 2007a.

⁹ See 19th century reports on the work of the Teacher Training School in Sombor, the Gymnasium in Sremski Karlovci, the Gymnasium in Novi Sad and the Theological Seminary in Sremski Karlovci.

¹⁰ Pütz 1855; Pütz 1861.

¹¹ Bošković 1866: 386.

¹² Boškov 2007a: 29–30

¹³ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁴ Boškov 2009: 31.

decades of the 19th century. His project for the rebirth of the nation and state rested on the *Bildung* concept, the constant self-awareness of the individual, his spiritual, mental, moral and physical powers. Knowledge of classical Antiquity became the lynchpin of Humboldt's reformed educational system.¹⁵ It was based on mathematics, classical languages and history and was supposed to enable a broad general education. His model of classic studies implied the system of *Gymnasia* – institutions where students were educated to analyse and interpret ancient texts. By the fourth decade of the 19th century, the *Gimnasium* was the necessary pre-condition for access to universities, while by mid-century, knowledge of the classical past had become the standard privilege of the state, economic and cultural elite.¹⁶ It was Johann Joachim Winckelmann's *History of Ancient Art (Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums, 1764)* that prompted Humboldt in this direction. In this work, the author describes the beauty of Greek art created and developed in the free and constitutionally ordered Greeks *poleis*. From this we can pick up Winckelmann's essential idea: that only a stable and free society can enable culture to develop, and art and creative masterpieces to emerge.¹⁷ The Serbian intellectual elite had its own reasons for turning toward classical antiquity. In doing so, it not only caught up with the developed European countries, but was also free to promote values that favoured development of a national identity, even though as yet it had no country it could call its own.

When expounding the ancient past, priority was given to political history, with art and culture following closely behind. Certain lessons obviously received more attention than others and were considerably broader in scope. These had to do with the struggle for freedom from foreign powers (the Ionian Revolt, the Greco-Persian Wars, Alexander the Great and his conquests), or they described key roles played by individuals in the political or cultural life of some country or major event. Particular emphasis was given to the merits of individuals whose deeds had marked a certain era. This approach is only to be expected for the time, as nations were constantly reinventing their ethnic values and myths, and were in constant need of a sacred territory, a hero and a golden age that would encourage a form of ethnicity which would inspire in nationalists the feeling of belonging to a group.¹⁸

1.2. The image of Alexander the Great in 19th century Serbian history textbooks

Because of his conquests and the struggle to free the Ionian Greeks from the power of the Persians, Alexander the Great was already famous in Ancient Greece. The Greco-Persian Wars and the idea of Panhellenism, whose most famous advocate is Isocrates, were an excellent foundation for placing the Alexander's campaign in this context even during his lifetime.¹⁹ Diodorus, a Greek historian of the 1st century B.C. thus described Alexander the Great in his book on *The Historical Library*:

¹⁵ Babić 2012: 43.

¹⁶ Mihajlović 2012: 750; Dyson 2006: 121; Babić 2008: 19.

¹⁷ For more on this see: Mihajlović 2012; Babić 2008; *Id.*, 2012; Babić – Mihajlović 2016.

¹⁸ Koljanin 2013: 14.

¹⁹ Rhodes 2012: 1075.

3. Ἐν ὀλίγῳ δὲ χρόνῳ μεγάλας πράξεις οὗτος ὁ βασιλεὺς κατειργάσατο καὶ διὰ τὴν ἰδίαν σύνεσιν τε καὶ ἀνδρείαν ὑπερεβάλετο τῷ μεγέθει τῶν ἔργων πάντας τοὺς ἐξ αἰῶνος τῆ μνήμη παραδεδομένους βασιλεῖς: 4. Ἐν ἔτεσι γὰρ δώδεκα καταστρεψάμενος τῆς μὲν Εὐρώπης οὐκ ὀλίγα, τὴν δὲ Ἀσίαν σχεδὸν ἅπασαν εἰκότως περιβόητον ἔσχε τὴν δόξαν καὶ τοῖς παλαιοῖς ἤρωσι καὶ ἡμιθέοις ἰσάζουσαν. Ἀλλὰ γὰρ οὐκ ἀναγκαῖον ἡμῖν ἐν τῷ προοιμίῳ προλαμβάνειν τι τῶν κατωρθωμένων τούτῳ τῷ βασιλεῖ: αὐταὶ γὰρ αἱ κατὰ μέρος πράξεις ἰκανῶς μηνύσουσι τὸ μέγεθος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ.²⁰

‘3. Alexander accomplished great things in a short space of time, and by his acumen and courage surpassed in the magnitude of his achievements all kings whose memory is recorded from the beginning of time. 4. In twelve years he conquered no small part of Europe and practically all of Asia, and so acquired a fabulous reputation like that of the heroes and demigods of old. But there is really no need to anticipate in the introduction any of the accomplishments of this king; his deeds reported one by one will attest sufficiently the greatness of his glory.’

Plutarch, the celebrated biographer of the 1st and early 2nd centuries A.D., also writes of Alexander’s character:

Οὐ γὰρ ἠδονὴν ζηλῶν οὐδὲ πλοῦτον, ἀλλ’ ἀρετὴν καὶ δόξαν, ἐνόμιζεν, ὅσῳ πλείονα λήψεται παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς, ἐλάττονα κατορθώσιν δι’ ἑαυτοῦ, διὸ τοῖς πράγμασιν αὐξομένοις καταναλίσκεσθαι τὰς πράξεις εἰς ἐκεῖνον ἡγούμενος, ἐβούλετο μὴ χρήματα μηδὲ τρωφὰς καὶ ἀπολαύσεις, ἀλλ’ ἀγῶνας καὶ πολέμους καὶ φιλοτιμίας ἔχουσαν ἀρχὴν παραλαβεῖν.²¹

‘For since he did not covet pleasure, nor even wealth, but excellence and fame, he considered that the more he should receive from his father the fewer would be the successes won by himself. Therefore, considering that increase in prosperity meant the squandering upon his father of opportunities for achievement, he preferred to receive from him a realm which afforded, not wealth nor luxury and enjoyment, but struggles and wars and ambitions.’

The Roman historian, Arrian, in the late 1st and early 2nd century A.D., writes in his *Anabasis of Alexander* of Alexander’s fame:

Ὡς ἔγωγε δοκῶ ὅτι οὔτε τι ἔθνος ἀνθρώπων οὔτε τις πόλις ἐν τῷ τότε ἦν οὔτε τις εἷς ἄνθρωπος εἰς ὃν οὐ πεφοιτῆται τὸ Ἀλεξάνδρου ὄνομα. Οὐκ οὐδὲ ἐμοὶ ἔξω τοῦ θεοῦ φῦναι ἂν δοκεῖ ἀνὴρ οὐδενὶ ἄλλῳ ἀνθρώπων εὐοικῶς.²²

‘For I myself believe that there was at that time no race of mankind, no city, no single individual, whither the name of Alexander had not reached. And so not even I can suppose that a man quite beyond all other men was born without some divine influence.’

Historical circumstances of the 19th and 20th centuries led to changes in Alexander’s image, which thereafter began to vary in the historiography. As Nemanja Vujčić notes, the prevailing ideological matrix of an era affects the work of a historian, his analysis and interpretation of events.²³ The observation of Reinhold Bichler thus comes as no surprise when he says that the historiographical view of Alexander’s conquests reflected

²⁰ Diod. Sic. 17, I 3-4. (trans. By C. H. Oldfather).

²¹ Plut. *Vit. Alex.* 5. (trans. B. Perrin)

²² Arr. *Anab.* VII 30. 2. (trans. P. A. Brunt)

²³ Vujčić 2016: 60–84, pos. 61.

developments in historical thinking. As he points out, conflicts with the Ottoman Empire, the campaigns of the Swedish King Charles XII, the opening of new naval and trade routes to India, even Napoleon's campaigns and the Greek War of Independence were judged in the light of Alexander's actions.²⁴

Testimony to the strength of this tendency is the fact that even the famous Johann Gustav Droysen yielded to it, and in the mid-19th century was the first to introduce the term Hellenism.²⁵ Before Droysen, the history of ancient Greece was considered to have ended with the battle of Chaeronea, and the period following this Macedonian victory was seen as one of general decadence and degeneration.²⁶ In his *History of Hellenism (Geschichte des Hellenismus)*, Droysen gathered all historical sources relating to the post-Chaeronea period, critically processed them and showed that up to that point, Alexander the Great had been unjustly neglected. The success of Droysen's work can best be understood by glancing at the political and ideological background. Germany in the 1840s was in the throes of national unification and any movement in this direction was regarded with sympathy. Droysen saw Prussia in Macedonia, was persuaded that the Macedonians were Greeks, and that the battle of Chaeronea and the victory of Philip II had brought Greece national unification.²⁷ Since the Serbian intellectual elite had mostly been educated at universities in the German cultural area, it is unlikely that the background to this interpretation of the historical role of Alexander the Great could have remained unremarked, the more so since its models were primarily German works, textbooks included.

Droysen was not alone in showing the strength and endurance of the idea that Alexander was a protagonist of Greek civilisation.²⁸ Some contemporary scholars, such as Ian Worthington, advocate similar views.²⁹ For the reasons already given, it is logical to ask whether or not the special treatment accorded to Alexander the Great in 19th-century Serbian history textbooks was prompted by a certain 'national agenda'.

1.3. Textbook by Konstantin Bojić

The oldest history textbook in the Serbian language was written by Konstantin Bojić and printed in Novi Sad in 1843 under the title *History of the Greek People from its Origin to the Most Recent Times*. Konstantin Bojić did not bequeath many works to Serbian literature, but this particular one is remembered as the first textbook printed in Serbian which described the Greek people in Antiquity.³⁰ It probably emerged in response to a need for teaching tools in Serbian schools, as its form seems to indicate - questions on the history

²⁴ Bichler 2017: 640–674, pos. 640.

²⁵ Wilcken 1967: XII–XIII; Kreissig 1987: 5; Papazoglu 1995.

²⁶ Papazoglu 1995: 11.

²⁷ Wilcken 1967: XII; Papazoglu 1995: 12.

²⁸ Wilcken 1967: XIII.

²⁹ Worthington 2010: 118.

³⁰ Of the importance of this work for Serbian historiography also testifies the fact that, until 2011 and the appearance of the book by Ivan Jordović *The Ancient Greeks: A Portrait* this had been the only history of ancient Greece written by a Serbian author. All other histories of ancient Greece published in Serbian language had been translations of foreign authors.

of Ancient Greece with the answer immediately provided by the author.³¹ Mirjana Gross considers that the work was based on romantic revolutionary ideas of freedom and equality, of a people with the right to determine their own destiny through the struggle for national liberation and unification, and therefore the right to be educated in their own language.³² At that time, Serbian schools in the Habsburg Monarchy learned from scripts written in German and, to an extent, in Russian. The title page of Bojić's book announces that it was based on the German example. Its availability meant that Serbian students and young people could finally read about Greek history in their own language.³³ One chapter is dedicated to Alexander the Great. In it, Bojić chronicles Alexander's youth, the destruction of Thebes, the great battles which he led against the Persians, the countries he had conquered, his death and his successors.³⁴ At the end of the book there is a chapter on the Greek heroes, with Bojić according most of the space to Alexander and his feats.³⁵

1.4. Textbook by Stojan Bošković

Our second subject for analysis is the *History of the World for the People and for Schools*, published by Stojan Bošković in Belgrade in 1866. Bošković taught general history at The Great School – Belgrade's first high school – and continued to do so later from 1877 to 1879 and from 1883 to 1887.³⁶ He was minister of education, member of the State Council, a diplomat and member of the Serbian Academic Society. His work in the ministry of education in the second half of the 19th century was of importance in raising the standard of history teaching at the Great School and in all Serbian schools.³⁷ He believed that history should be the foundation of education and that its task was to explain all notable events and changes crucial to the development of human society. Two things, he considered, were the key drivers of history: first, reform, and secondly, revolution. Both processes take place in accordance with justice and the liberation of the people and individuals from abuse by those in power.³⁸ As minister of education, he instituted reforms in order to assist the new government in administering the young Serbian state. Here, he considered history played a crucial role and his textbook makes frequent mention of the various constitutions and systems of government of the preceding states,³⁹ as may be seen from the lesson on Alexander the Great. It opens with the education of the young Alexander, describes how he came to power and his first military victories against the Greeks. The period of his rule from the campaign against the Persians to his death is presented in terms of his conquests.⁴⁰ It is interesting that Bošković's book contains a separate lesson, *Alexander's Character*,

³¹ Boškov 2007a: 22.

³² Gross 1980: 82.

³³ Boškov 2018: 50.

³⁴ Bojić 1843: 75–76

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 80.

³⁶ In 1906, the Great School became Belgrade University.

³⁷ Bubalo 1997: 294.

³⁸ Bošković 1866: 3; Vasiljević 1867: 215.

³⁹ Dimitrijević 1867: 239

⁴⁰ Bošković 1866: 245–250.

which examines all the features of his rule. The first part deals with the state system. According to the author, Alexander ruled from the Danube to the Indus and from the Caspian Sea to Ethiopia because he adhered to the Persian division of territory, the difference being that the people who ruled these territorial units had to commit themselves to spreading Hellenic culture. Alexander, in his turn, embraced the eastern way of life, something which did not meet with the approval of his friends. The author writes of these disagreements which led to the murder of a couple of his closest comrades. Towards the end, the author gives his opinion of Alexander the Great, which is uncommon for a history textbook. He draws a moral for the reader, pointing out that Alexander's lamentable treatment of his friends is an example of how might and power can change a man, who at a given moment allows himself to be led astray by pleasure and passion, forgetting justice and decency.⁴¹ This story of Alexander's actions bears a clear message from author to reader that those who rule the state cannot afford to be swayed by feelings and personal ambition, but should uphold the constitution and laws, since only thus can the state respond to the demands of its citizens.

1.5. Textbook by Aleksandar Sandić

The third textbook is a *History of the World* by Aleksandar Sandić, printed in Novi Sad in 1869 when Sandić was teaching English and Serbian at the Serbian Gymnasium in the city. In a prologue, he says that so far there had been no history of the world in the Serbian language, that the book would serve better than all the German textbooks used up to then, which might well be the best, but were, after all, written for the requirements of young Germans.⁴² The comment clearly shows that the Serbian intellectual elite was aware that textbooks were being written to a certain national agenda. In a review published in *Danica* magazine, M. Dimitrijević highlights as the book's chief contribution that it is written in the Serbian language.⁴³ As a German student, Aleksandar Sandić was familiar with the best German textbooks and declared that one source he had used was the Pütz textbook referred to earlier. At the same time, however, he points out that he adapted some lessons for the study of the history of the Serbian people: events of importance for the history of the Serbs, or in which they took part as a nation, are presented in more detail in order to meet their educational requirements.⁴⁴ Sandić also pays more attention to certain historical figures than others and these lessons are longer than the rest. One such is about Alexander the Great.

He begins with Alexander's birth and upbringing. According to Sandić, the key role in his education was the love of Homer and poetry instilled by his teacher, Aristotle. The focus is on Alexander's desire for conquest and his initial victories over the Greeks to the south and the Illyrians to the north. According to Sandić, Alexander's main objective was to vanquish the Persian Empire. Much attention is given to the campaign against Darius,

⁴¹ Bošković 1866: 250–251.

⁴² Sandić 1869: 272

⁴³ Dimitrijević 1867: 236–237.

⁴⁴ For more on textbook of Aleksandar Sandić see Boškov 2010: 55–63.

with Alexander's military achievements described in detail.⁴⁵ In some places Sandić underlines certain events from these campaigns, explaining the real reasons for their success and how Alexander went about putting the state in order following his wartime exploits. According to Sandić, the crucial goal for Alexander's subjugation of Asia Minor, the Levant and Egypt was the liberation of these territories from Persian rule. Greeks lived on the shores of Asia Minor, so Alexander's campaign was actually a struggle for their freedom. A similar situation repeated itself during the conquest of Egypt. The Egyptians greeted Alexander as a liberator, since he respected Egyptian religion and traditions.⁴⁶ As for the eastern territories of the Persian Empire, we cannot speak of their emancipation from Persian rule, but Sandić sees three key factors because of which the various peoples who inhabited it, including the Persians, were quick to accept Alexander. Firstly, he retained the same satrap who had ruled the satrapy prior to its conquest, on condition that he accepted Alexander's authority. Alexander thus showed that he came as a peacemaker and not as a conqueror. Secondly, Alexander embraced Persian customs and ceremonies and began to conduct himself in the manner of a Persian ruler, the overriding idea being that the vanquished should not view him as a foreigner. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, he exercised a milder authority than the Persian rulers, respected alien gods and the customs of the conquered peoples.⁴⁷ However, his behavior led to problems with his friends who were unwilling to comply with the new customs and situations. Sandić believes that these disagreements led Alexander to unnecessarily murder several of his friends, but that this nonetheless strengthened his political power. Sandić then describes Alexander's campaign against Porus, his return to Susa and Babylon, and his death.⁴⁸ The last chapter addresses the culture of Alexander's time. The main accomplishments of his influence were several cultural centers in conquered territory such as Alexandria in Egypt, the island of Rhodes, Antioch in Syria and Babylon in Mesopotamia. According to Sandić, Alexander's key role meant that their development formed bases from which Hellenic culture could spread to the peoples of the East.⁴⁹

1.6. Textbook by Miloš Zečević

The fourth textbook is *A History of Ancient Times – A Survey for Higher Education* by Miloš Zečević. Published in Belgrade in 1896 after the author's death, it is an amended and enlarged edition of a previous one from 1880. Zečević taught at gymnasiums in Kragujevac and Belgrade and at the Great School, where he lectured in general history from 1889 to 1895.⁵⁰ His work dedicated much attention to Alexander the Great, whom he presents as a celebrated conqueror and brilliant general, and gives a detailed account of his campaign against Persia. To highlight the importance of Alexander's work, Zečević

⁴⁵ Sandić 1869: 140–143.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 140–142.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 143–144.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁵⁰ Mihaljević 1997: 389.

frequently uses historical sources, particularly Plutarch and Arrian. He always places these passages in quotation marks, but never cites the sources from which they were taken.

In the *Letopis Matice Srpske*, Jovan Djordjević severely criticized the first edition of Zečević's textbook of 1880, which he states was written after a German model, i.e., Gustav Struve, whom he denounces as long since outdated and never used in German schools.⁵¹

Djordjević also objects to Zečević's dwelling on segments from the lives of lesser-known figures, while failing adequately to cover the major political actors. Zečević rejects this criticism with the argument that 'lesser' individuals were just as important as 'the greatest' historical names and substantiates this by comparing Alexander the Great and Caesar with James Watt and Felton.

Interestingly, Djordjević criticises Zečević's attitude towards Alexander as biased, in fact showing marked animosity.⁵² Zečević and Djordjević believed in the power of education and social progress as the foundations for a liberal view of the world, and both advocated an interpretation of history from a liberal European point of view.⁵³ The difference is that Zečević perceives the historical process as a struggle between king and people,⁵⁴ since he was influenced by the ideas of the French revolution which he covers extensively in his *History of the World*, and which are immediately apparent in his writing on Alexander the Great. Djordjević, on the other hand, a disciple of Ruvarac's historiographical opinions,⁵⁵ perceived the historical process as a freedom movement to rally and unify the nation. Zečević undoubtedly presents Alexander as a conqueror and leader of the Greeks in their struggle for freedom against the Persian ruler, i.e., king. However, it is obvious that according to Djordjević, Zečević does not do so to a sufficient degree. The conflict is thus another indicator that in Serbian intellectual circles of the 19th century, the image of Alexander the Great was used in the interests of a national agenda.

Zečević did not accept any of these objections to his treatment of Alexander the Great. His style is unusual, and the selection of passages from Alexander's life interesting. The impression is that this is more an essay than a history schoolbook, especially not one for the higher grades as claimed on the title page. Another point of interest is that Zečević, his animosity notwithstanding, writes about Alexander in great detail. He also brings to light some information missing in other authors of Serbian textbooks, such as the mention of the Autariatae and Delmatae⁵⁶ who rebelled against Alexander's rule, and whom he subjugated in the campaign against the Triballi tribes. Another example is when Zečević writes of Alexander's mother being angry because he proclaimed himself to be the son of God.⁵⁷

Zečević also dealt in detail with the culture of the ancient peoples. The segment on Hellenic culture is divided into five chapters: *the poets*, a separate chapter on *builders, sculptors and painters*, followed by *orators, historians*, and finally *philosophers and naturalists*. In the Hellenic period, he underlines the role of artists in spreading their culture

⁵¹ Djordjević 1883: 149.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 120. For several examples of Zečević's animosity towards Alexander see his textbook, Zečević 1896: 185

⁵³ Bešlin 2007: 131

⁵⁴ Jovanović 1990: 75–76.

⁵⁵ Kovaček 1964: 342.

⁵⁶ Zečević 1896: 182.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 183.

to the east and particularly the contribution of literature and philosophy to writers of the Christian era.⁵⁸

1.7. Textbook by Oton Varga

A History of the World according to the Curriculum for High Schools by Oton Varga is a Hungarian textbook translated into Serbian by Milan A. Jovanović.⁵⁹ This was the first general history textbook to be translated from Hungarian for students of the Novi Sad Gymnasium. The translation was the result of a proposal by the Patronate (one of the school's two managing bodies) that all schoolbooks used should be translated into Serbian.⁶⁰ The intention was a subtle repression of attempts by Budapest to promote study of the Hungarian language in this school. On the one hand, the Patronate was complying with Budapest, since the school was using a textbook by a Hungarian author, while on the other, Magyarization was avoided by taking a Serbian translation and not the Hungarian original.

In Varga's book, military and political history predominates. In every chapter on the government and social systems of the ancient states, Varga makes special reference to legislation. This is also the case when he writes about Alexander the Great and his state. At the beginning of the lesson, the author poses an interesting question, hitherto unasked in history textbooks – 'Are the Macedonians Hellenized barbarians or barbarized Hellenes?' In the absence of a real answer to this question, he notes differences in the way of life of these cattle-breeding people who lived to the north of Greece and Greeks from the south.⁶¹ He claims that Alexander saw himself as a Greek and that this was the crucial factor in endeavouring to unify them and lead them into battle against the Persians. He points out that this was the first campaign initiated by Europeans against an eastern people outside the boundaries of today's Europe.⁶² Varga gives a detailed description of the campaign itself. He also describes Alexander's personality, waxing enthusiastic over his ideas and absence of humility in his desire to conquer the whole world. And here he passes negative judgment on the historical role of Persia:

'Persia did not promote culture but rather obstructed it, for out of simple fear for its own survival it strangled any freedom of rivalry or development of strength among the people, and in that way governed them'.⁶³

The author believes that Alexander's ideas were not understood by his contemporaries, something that brought about the swift downfall of the Empire following his death in 323 B.C. The return to the old order turned out badly for the Hellenes, since traditional envy

⁵⁸ Zečević 1896: 203–216.

⁵⁹ For a description of Oton Varga's textbook see Stojkovski–Boškov, 2015.

⁶⁰ The Patronate managed the work of the Gymnasium and had eight members. At its head were the Karlovac Orthodox Metropolitan and the Bishop of Novi Sad as supreme patrons. The remaining six members were from the Bačka Consistorium, four of whom came from the Serbian church-school parish of Novi Sad; see Stajić 1949: 292.

⁶¹ Varga 1898: 79.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 84.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 88.

resurfaced. This particularly favoured the rise of a new power on the historical stage – Rome. In his writing on Alexander, we find in Varga a piece of information that is missing from other history textbooks of the period. Alexander's Indian campaign is given a separate chapter in which, besides the customary description of the Battle of the Hydaspes and the meeting of Alexander and King Porus, the author gives a very detailed description of their culture, government and social system.

It is indicative that Varga does not speak of Alexander as a liberator. The fact that he sees Alexander's conquests differently from the Serbian authors may be explained by the vastly different position of Hungarians in the Habsburg Monarchy. Furthermore, Varga sees Alexander's greatest contribution in his ability to merge the peoples living in the newly-conquered territories despite their diversity. This coincides with the perception of the two constitutive nations of Austro-Hungary as a monarchy which successfully unites numerous peoples.

Varga presents the Greeks as eminent scholars and sees the Macedonians as impressive warriors and heroes. However, he considers that neither is capable of creating, ordering and maintaining great states such as Persia once was.⁶⁴ Alexander he sees as a ruler who creates a new state and unites the various people within it while making use of their best abilities and characteristics.

2. Textbooks in a teaching context

The image of Alexander the Great in Serbian history textbooks of the 19th century has several traits. First, he is depicted as one of the greatest military leaders of the ancient world, whose charisma was a consequence not only of his military prowess, but of exceptional personal courage. Secondly, there is a clear tendency to present Alexander as the liberator and unifier of subjugated peoples. Thirdly, the guiding idea of Alexander's rule is perceived as the spread of Hellenic culture while practising the best that eastern culture had to offer, even though this encounters resistance from his comrades-in-arms. Fourthly, Alexander the Great is shown as a real person with all his virtues and faults. Here we can discern dissension between authors. Some completely idealize him, others see only a cruel and arrogant despot, while others again consider him a good but merciless ruler. Fifthly, several indications point to discreet efforts to adapt Alexander's image in order to rouse Serbian national awareness. Thus, there is a noticeable difference in how Alexander the Great is presented in comparison with other no less important and famous historical figures. Gaius Julius Caesar was just as great a conqueror and statesman, a man who marked the end of one historical epoch and heralded the beginning of another. In all the textbooks, however, lessons on Caesar do not devote nearly as much attention to his personality, or to the fact that his conquests led to the spread of Roman culture throughout a considerable part of Western Europe, which then became part of a single state. He is represented above all as a great conqueror, then as a figure who lusted after absolute power in the Roman state.⁶⁵ Another indication is the difference between how Alexander the Great is presented in

⁶⁴ Varga 1898: 89.

⁶⁵ Bošković 1866: 336–344; Sandić 1869: 222–227.

German and Serbian textbooks. In Serbian textbooks, he is represented as a conqueror, unifier, but also as a liberator. This is not the case in German sources. Neither Wilhelm Pütz nor Gustav Struve spoke of Alexander as a liberator, only as a conqueror and unifier.⁶⁶ Oton Varga, otherwise very positive in expressing himself about Alexander, also avoids presenting him as a liberator. In contrast to them, Bošković writes that Alexander liberated Asia Minor and Egypt from Persian power,⁶⁷ while Sandić also recounts the liberation of Syria, Palestine and all the territories through which he passed.⁶⁸ Zečević, too, presents Alexander as a liberator, pointing out that he freed the Greeks in Asia Minor and Egypt from Persian rule.⁶⁹

A brief glance at the tendencies of the time in which these schoolbooks were published confirms the findings so far; more importantly, it demonstrates something the textbooks never make explicit: the connection between the struggle for the freedom of the Serbian people and the Greek war against the Persians.

The translation and publication of textbooks into Serbian may be interpreted as a response to Budapest's attempts at Magyarization of the other peoples living in its part of the monarchy.⁷⁰ This was stepped up especially following the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867. Learning Hungarian was mandatory from 1863,⁷¹ Hungarian history from 1879.⁷² With the introduction of these subjects, the number of classes in general was reduced along with national history. In 1879, the Hungarian minister of education did permit an increase in the number of classes conducted in Serbian. However, this was accompanied by an obligation to use official textbooks, not unofficial scripts, and a repetition of demands for the study of Hungarian language and history. The unequivocal ban on unofficial scripts clearly shows the Ministry of Education's attempts to control the curriculum. Together with the emphasis on Hungarian language and history, it demonstrates that textbooks and history lessons had become a battleground in the struggle for national identity. The solution to which the Serbian intellectual elite resorted consisted of two parts. The first was that textbooks were published in Serbian. Secondly, the subject matter was adjusted so that it implicitly supported the national agenda. This approach is best reflected in the fact that in response to the new situation, teachers of Serbian taught their students their national history by means of written essays and with the help of subjects from the ancient world.⁷³ In reports on the work of the Novi Sad Gymnasium for 1882–1883 and 1884–1885 the following written essays in the Serbian language are cited: *The Defence of the Greeks from the Persian Onslaught in Ancient Times and the Uprising of the Serbs against the Turks under Karadjordje and Miloš in our Times; Montenegro and Sparta: a Comparison; Rhapsodists among the Greeks and Gusle-Players among the Serbs; Hercules among the Greeks and Kraljević Marko among the Serbs; Point out the features of epic song in the first book of*

⁶⁶ Struve 1856: 33–42; Pütz 1861: 384–412.

⁶⁷ Bošković 1866: 246, 248

⁶⁸ Sandić 1869: 140–141.

⁶⁹ Zečević 1896: 183.

⁷⁰ For the process of Magyarization see Vasin 2015: 553–558; 561–564; Mikavica 2017.

⁷¹ Stajić 1949: 335.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 322.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

*Homer's Iliad and compare them with those of the epic in Serbian folk song; The Parting of Hector with Andromache and Empress Milica with her Jugovići Brothers.*⁷⁴ These subjects prove beyond a doubt that topics from ancient history were discreetly instrumentalized in order to nurture national awareness. Open instrumentalization in Serbian textbooks was out of the question, since the central authorities could easily prevent it. However, the highlighting of phenomena from ancient history and their presentation from a certain angle was considerably more difficult to spot. It left open the possibility that these same aspects could be linked through teaching to one's own national strivings. This would also explain differences in how Alexander the Great was presented in Serbian, Hungarian and German textbooks and the discrepancy regarding Caesar's image. The intention of the present study is to point out how the reception of Antiquity can, in a surprisingly subtle way, be used to strengthen and preserve the national identity.

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⁷⁴ This datum was first observed by J. Mamula (1960: 23), who is of the opinion that in the circumstances of the time it was a way of familiarizing students with Serbian history, albeit at the price of certain deviations from a scholarly understanding of our past.

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СВЕТОЗАР БОШКОВ
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**АЛЕКСАНДАР ВЕЛИКИ
У СРПСКИМ УЧБЕНИЦИМА ИСТОРИЈЕ У XIX ВЕКУ**

Резиме

Александар Велики (356. године пре н. е. – 323. године пре н. е) је био један од највећих освајача у античком свету и у историји уопште. Са само 30 година успео је да освоји све до тада познате државе античког света. Простор који је контролисао простирао се од Грчке на западу преко Египта на југу па све до Индије на истоку. Због својих војних успеха био је инспирација многим писцима свога времена, али и многим писцима у каснијим временима. С обзиром да је обележио једну епоху коју данас називамо хеленизам, своје место нашао је и у свим образовним системима Европе. Од појаве првих учбеника историје у Европи се учило о Александру Великом и његовим подвизима. Средином XIX века код Срба се појављују први учбеници историје на српском језику, а своје место у њима нашао је и Александар Велики.

Слику Александра Великог у српским учбеницима историје у XIX веку одликује неколико особина. Прво, приказан је као један од највећих војсковођа античког света чија харизма је била последица не само његовог војног дела, већ и изузетне личне храбрости. Друго, постоји јасна склоност да се Александар прикаже као ослободилац покорених народа и њихов ујединитељ. Треће, као идеја водиља Александрове владавине види се ширење хеленске културе уз имплементирање оног најбољег од источњачке културе, иако је ово последње наилазило на отпор код његових сабораца. Четврто, Александар Велики се приказује као личност са свим њеним врлинама и манама. При томе се може уочити неслагање између аутора учбеника. Једни га у потпуности идеализују, други у њему виде само суровог и охолог деспота, док га трећи сматрају добрим, али немилосрдним владарем. Пето, могуће је опазити неколико индиција да постоји тежња да се слика Александра Великог дискретно прилагоди потребама јачања српске националне свести. Тако постоји приметна разлика у представљању Александра Великог у односу на друге ништа мање важне и знамените историјске личности попут Гај Јулија Цезара. Друга индиција је разлика у представљању Александра Великог у немачким и српским учбеницима. У српским учбеницима је представљен као освајач, ујединитељ, али и као ослободилац, што није случај у немачким учбеницима. Трећа индиција су извештаји о раду Новосадске гимназије из 1882/1883 и 1884/1885. године у којима проналазимо писмене теме из српског језика (нпр. *Одбрана Јелина од навале перзијске у старо доба и устанак Срба а Турке под Карађорђем и Милоше у наше доба*) које нам предочавају оно што никад није експлицитно изречено у учбеницима: повезивање борбе за ослобођење српског народа повезује са борбом Грка против Персијанаца. Учење националне историје на часовима српског језика било је узроковано смањењем часова из опште и националне историје због увођења наставе мађарског језика и историје Угарске. Наведени пример показује како су теме из антике историје дискретно инструментализоване у сврху неговања националне свести. Отворена инструментализација у учбеницима на српском језику никад није била могућа, пошто је централна власт сваки такав покушај лако могла да контролише и спречи. Међутим, истицање одређених феномена из античке историје и њихово приказивање из одређеног угла било је знатно теже уочити, али је остављало могућност да се ти исти аспекти у току саме наставе асоцирају са сопственим

националним стремљењима. То би објаснило разлике у приказивању Александра Великог у српским и немачким уџбеницима, као и одударање у односу на слику Цезара.

Кључне речи: Александар Велики, уџбеници историје, српске школе, XIX век, антика.

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