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Book Abstract

Illustrated historical chronology (Novi Sad: Platoneum, 2004)

Ilustrovane hronologije (original title)

This textbook is the result of a fellowship from the special program for the development of teaching materials and curricula in history as a school subject in Southeast Europe from the Georg Eckert Institut für internationale Schulbuchforschung in Braunschweig. It is envisaged as additional teaching material for history in schools in Serbia and is aimed both at teachers and students in all school grades where history is taught.

So far there has been no serious attempt at compiling and presenting historical chronology in the Serbian language and even less so for school use. Conceptually this textbook follows the model of existing chronologies in other languages in that it gives specific time tables with short references about historical events, processes and statistics. References are structured in parallel columns organized by the nature of historic events.

The value for the school use of this textbook is twofold. First, it provides information on various aspects of human history such as economy, culture, art, religion, law, etc, thus widely expanding the focus on the political history of the existing school

textbooks in Serbia. Secondly, it supercedes the narrow national orientation of the existing textbooks by providing three parallel loci of focus – national history, events in the neighborhood and general history. Students are expected to observe similarities and differences and thus develop methods of comparison, conclusion and independent thinking in general. In addition, specific tables of particular historical developments or processes are provided both as an add-on to the general timeline structure of the book, and as appendixes. They are adjusted to student interests and include topics ranging from the introduction of coffee, chocolate and tea in Europe to the list of Nobel peace prize winners, from the invention of household appliances to the history of means of transportation and communication. Aspects of history generally neglected in the textbooks currently used in Serbian schools are given special emphasis either by providing references in the general timeline or by individual tables. Examples for this include the presentation of Holocaust or issues pertaining to women's history. The very limited presentation of history of neighboring countries and peoples in the Serbian textbooks is especially addressed with extensive information collected from their general histories and history textbooks. This scope-widening is aimed at teachers, supplying them with a supplementary material and an efficient reminder in class preparation, as well as for students who want to increase their knowledge. The chronological tables also invite students to research and explore further. They can use the existing models to prepare the chronologies of their own towns and regions or to focus on certain period. Then, they can be asked to elaborate why certain events were included or excluded from the tables, etc. Finally, the chronological tables could also be used in organizing student competitions.

The modern graphical design and layout of the book, as well as the methodology of comparative chronological tables themselves, are expected to further enhance student interest in history and their motivation for history as a school subject. The new information provided seeks not only to widen knowledge horizons but with the help of its appearance and method to create a basis for enhancing the critical thinking, inter-ethnic tolerance and understanding among the students, which are set as goals of the education reform in Serbia.