

Concepts of
Nationalism and Patriotism in
Serbian Political Discourse:
Medieval, Modern,
Contemporary

Proceedings of the
Conference held on 30–31 May 2024
at the University of Belgrade,
Faculty of Philosophy

Edited by
Smilja Marjanović-Dušanić
Aleksandar Z. Savić

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Isidora Točanac Radović

Institute of History Belgrade

isidora.tocanac.radovic@iib.ac.rs

*NATIO NOSTRA ILLYRICO-RASCIANA
SEU SERVIANA:*
THE CREATION OF A PRIVILEGED IDENTITY
OF SERBS IN THE HABSBURG MONARCHY

The edicts of Leopold I, Holy Roman Emperor and King of Hungary, played a significant role in shaping the identity of Serbs in the Habsburg Monarchy. Between 1690 and 1695, he issued special edicts, known as Privileges, that granted Serbs certain freedoms and rights. As believers of the Orthodox Church, Serbs were granted rights that other non-Catholic communities in the Habsburg Monarchy did not have at the time, the most important of which was the right to freely practice their Orthodox faith. In addition to the rights, freedoms and protections that the ruler granted to the Serbian Orthodox community by the Privileges, these edicts also laid the foundation for its communication with the state. The Privileges determined the way in which the imperial and royal court offices in Vienna described and defined the Serbian community and its church organisation, including the terms and expressions used. The Habsburg administration's terminology relating to Serbs established in the 17th century changed little during the 18th century. In official communication with the Court, Serbs adopted the terms and expressions from the Privileges, while in their communication within their community they often used different terms and expressions.

Emperor Leopold I began to address the peoples living south of the Sava and Danube during the Great Turkish War, when the Habsburg army was conquering Hungary in 1686/1687. Calling upon the peoples under Ottoman rule to rise in revolt, the emperor referred to them by the general term *Christiani*, emphasising the unity of Christian peoples in the fight against "Turkish tyranny". Leopold I later replaced this general reli-

gious designation with another term that specified a particular confession and introduced a precise ethnic designation for the people to whom he presented himself as a legitimate ruler. Through the text of the Privilege, issued through the Court Secret Chancellery on 21st August 1690, the Habsburg terminology regarding Serbs, their faith, and their church began to take shape. In that text, the Orthodox Church was referred to as the “Eastern Church of the Greek Rite” (*Orientalis Ecclesia Ritus Graeci*). The Serbian people were referred to as “Rascians”, i.e. the “community of the Greek Rite and the Rascian nation” (*Communitas ejusdem Graeci Ritus, et Nationis Rascianorum*). At the time of issuing the Privilege, Patriarch Arsenije III Čarnojević was recognised with the title “Archbishop of the Rascians of the Eastern Church of the Greek Rite” (*Orientalis Ecclesiae, Ritus Graeci Rascianorum Archi-Episcopus*). The same terms and expressions are found in the Protection Diploma of Leopold I issued on 11th December 1690 and the Privilege issued on 20th August 1691, both through the Hungarian Court Chancellery. To describe the people, adjective “Serbian” was used for the first time in the Privilege issued through the Hungarian Court Chancellery on 4th March 1695. From the context in which it is used in the text, there is no doubt that it was a synonym for the adjective “Rascian”. Patriarch Arsenije III was mentioned with the title “Archbishop of Serbs of the Greek Rite” (*Servianorum Graeci Ritus Archi-Episcopus*), and for describing the people, the terms *Populum Servianum* and *Rasciani seu Serviani Populi* were used.

The “Greek Rite” as a term for the Orthodox faith became established in the Habsburg administration during the reign of Leopold I. Consequently, the expression “Eastern Church of the Greek Rite” became the official name of the Orthodox Church in the Habsburg Monarchy. These expressions appear sporadically in sources about Serbs in Hungary from the time of the issuance of the first two Privileges in 1690 and 1691, and later their use spread and was maintained throughout the following century. The terms *Graeci ritus* and *Orientalis Ecclesia Graeci Ritus* logically referred to that part of the Christian world that, after the Great Schism of 1054, retained the Byzantine, i.e. Greek rite in worship. For the Orthodox population, these were much more acceptable terms than *Schismatici*, a designation that had been frequently used until then in the state where the Roman Catholic faith was dominant.

In the process of accepting the names “Greek Rite” and “Eastern Church of the Greek Rite”, Serbs also played a role. The term “Our Holy Church of the Eastern Greek Law” was used in the petition submitted by representatives of the clergy and people gathered at the Assembly in Belgrade in June 1690. That petition, written in Serbo-Slavic, later served as the template for the first Privilege issued on 21st August 1690. In addi-

tion to that petition, Bishop Isaija Đaković of Jenopolje (Ineu), submitted a memorandum in Latin at the Court in Vienna, in which Patriarch Arsenije III was referred to by the title *Orientalis ecclesiae Graeci ritus Rascianorum archiepiscopus*, the Orthodox faith was called *Graeci ritus*, and Serbs were called *Graeci ritus Rasciani*.

After 1690, in official documents issued by central court institutions in Vienna, Serbs were consistently referred to as “Rasciani”. This name was adopted by the imperial administration from the Hungarian royal administration and is frequently found in sources of Habsburg origin from the 1670s onwards. The terms *Rasciani* and *Razy* appear in Hungarian sources sporadically from the late 12th century and are derived from the name Raška, which was a region of the medieval Serbian state. Their use gradually spread, and after the fall of the Serbian state to Ottoman rule, they became predominant terms for Serbs.

After the death of Leopold I, indications emerged that the Habsburg terminology referring to Serbs would be extended. In 1706, in a comprehensive response to the petition by Patriarch Arsenije III to the new ruler Joseph I, requesting confirmation of the Privileges, the Primate of Hungary, Cardinal Leopold Kollonitsch, referred to Serbs as the “Illyrian tribe” (*Gens Illyrica; Gens Illyrica seu Rasciana*), and to the Serbian language as the *Lingua Illyrica*. He also used the already established privileged terms for the Serbian Church (*Graeci Ritus Ecclesia*), the Serbian people (*Populus Rascianus*), and addressed Arsenije III by the title *Patriarch of Rascianorum*. However, he repeatedly called Serbs “schismatics”.

In the text by which Joseph I confirmed the Privileges through the Court Secret Chancellery on 7th August 1706, a new term was officially introduced to describe Serbs – *Illyrians* – as a synonym for the already established names. The Serbian people were referred to as the Illyrian or/and Rascian tribe and people (*Gentis et Populi Illyrici, sive Rasciani; Gentem Illyricam*). However, in the confirmation of the Privileges issued through the Hungarian Court Chancellery on 29th September 1706, there were no significant changes in terminology compared to the language of Leopold’s Privileges (*Gentis Rascianae, Populique Serviani Nominibus; Gentis et Populi Rasciani Ritum, gentis seu populi Rasciani*). The official title of Arsenije III at that time was Archbishop of the Eastern Church of the Greek Rite and Patriarch of Rascians (*Orientalis Ecclesiae Graeci Ritus Archi-Episcopus, et Rascianorum Patriarcha*), and this title was used in the confirmations issued through both chancelleries.

As a synonym for the Serbian people, the term Illyrian began to be officially used during the reign of Joseph I. In its original meaning, it referred to an imaginary concept of ancient heritage of the Balkan Slavs.

The idea of an Illyrian nation as a large Slavic community with a common origin emerged in the 16th century. It was widely accepted during the Great Turkish War, when the Habsburg army, following its capture of Belgrade in 1688, set out to liberate the Balkan Christians from Ottoman rule. The proponents of the idea of Illyrian nation were Count Đorđe Branković and Patriarch Arsenije III.

During the reign of Joseph I, Serbs began using the term Illyrian in their communication with state authorities, although they still more frequently referred to themselves as the Rascian people and Rascians. For example, in 1708, the signatories of a petition to General Kreutz in Osijek signed as *Ritus Graeci Gens Rasciana*. At the end of the same year, the decision to engage an agent in Vienna was signed with the words: *Ad servitium paratissimi Gentis Illuricae Graeci Ritus Status et Ordines*.

During the reign of Charles VI and Maria Theresia, there were no significant changes in terminology regarding Serbs. In their confirmations of Privileges issued through the Court Secret Chancellery in 1713 and 1743, respectively, the adjective Illyrian was used to describe the people, along with Rascian and Serbian. In the texts of the confirmations of Privileges issued through the Hungarian Court Chancellery in 1713 and 1743, the established terminology of Leopold's Privileges and the confirmations of Joseph I, issued through the same court chancellery, were used. The people were referred to as Rascian and Serbian. In the confirmations issued through both chancelleries, the Orthodox Church was referred to as the Eastern Church of the Greek Rite.

The terminology regarding Serbs from the Privileges and their confirmations remained in use throughout the 18th century. It is observed, however, that during the second half of the century, the term Serbian gradually disappears in sources of Habsburg origin, while Rascian and Illyrian are frequently used in describing the people. By the end of Maria Theresia's reign, the term Illyrian had prevailed over the term Rascian.

In rulers', court offices' and government representatives' official communication with Serbs, all the terms from the texts of the Privileges and their confirmations were used. In communication with state authorities, Serbs fully adopted and used the terminology of the Privileges and their confirmations. The expression *Nos Universitas Nationis Illyrico-Rascianae, Ecclesiasticis simul et Secularis Status*, or "We, the entire Illyrian-Rascian people, the clergy and the secular class together", was used by the National-Church Assembly in 1731 to describe itself as a distinct Serbian institution in the Habsburg Monarchy. The Assembly's decision to engage an agent in Vienna was intended for state authorities, and was composed in Latin using the Privileges' terminology. Thus, the Assembly emphasised

that the decision was made in the name of “our Illyrian-Rascian or Serbian nation” – *Nationis Nostrae Illyricae Rascianae, Seu Servianae*.

In communication within their community, Serbs retained traditional terminology. In the conclusions of the first National-Church Assembly held in the Krušedol Monastery in 1708, the people were referred to as “Slavo-Serbian”. In the documents related to the convening of the Assembly in 1781, we find the same expressions. In the instructions for the Assembly delegates, the terms “our Slavo-Serbian people” and “our Serbian people” are found. In most petitions and complaints submitted to the Assembly from all parts of the Habsburg Monarchy, there was no need for Serbs to use for themselves any term other than the simple “our people”. In describing the Orthodox faith, they used the terms common in their community: “Eastern piety”, “Christian law” or simply “Our law”.

The rights and freedoms granted by the Privileges, along with the terminology from the texts of these edicts and their confirmations imposed by the state and adopted by Serbs in official communication, shaped the identity of that religious and ethnic community in the Habsburg Monarchy. The names “Rascian and Illyrian people”, “Greek rite” and “Eastern Church of the Greek rite” became an integral part of the image that Serbs accepted of themselves and used to present themselves to others. This terminology became an integral part of the Serbian privileged identity. However, there was no need to describe a personal sense of belonging to the community with grandiose words. Expressions such as “our people” and “our law” were entirely sufficient for Serbs to define their ethnic and religious community.

Keywords: Serbs, Rascians, Illyrians, nation, identity, Privileges, Habsburg Monarchy, 17th century, 18th century