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## **“SERBS OF MOSAIC FAITH”: AN ANALYSIS OF DAVID A. KOEN’S “ORATIONS” AS A MODEL FOR NATIONAL INTEGRATION OF JEWS**

### **Abstract**

This article presents an analysis of the formation and discursive structure of texts collected in the book *Orations Dedicated to the Serb Youth of Mosaic Faith*, as a reflection of a particular project of integration of the Jewish population into the framework of the Serbian nation towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Based on the theoretical foundations of Rogers Brubaker and Siniša Malešević, the key ideological elements of such a project are identified, which allows for gaining insights both about the scope of conceptualising nationality immediately following the formation of a nation-state in the Balkans and the ways in which representatives of minority groups could present themselves as potential participants in shaping such conceptions. Following a contextualist approach, the analysis aims at uncovering a “political language”, one significantly informed by particular socio-political relations on the basis of which it may be (and may have been) possible to understand the nation and nationhood at a particular time and place.

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## INTRODUCTION

The process of the emergence of early modern Serbia as a nation-state in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was likewise accompanied by processes of delineating the Serbian national community on which the state would rely and claim as its own. Depending on the specific conception of the national community, different groups could remain outside the limits of the nation, yet still within the limits of the state, which confronted them with an unstable position and potential exclusion from various political processes. The Jewish population, present from antiquity in the areas of the independent Serbian state established following the Congress of Berlin in 1878 (Lebl 2001, 1), presented just such a group which could be left outside the dominant conception of “Serbhood,” differing from the majority population by faith, language, and particular cultural heritage. An example of resistance to such an exclusion of Jews from the Serb nation and an attempt to redefine it towards a more inclusive model can be found in the work of David A. Koen (1854–1915), reflected in his numerous speeches collected in the book *Orations Dedicated to Serb Youth of Mosaic Faith*.

The notion of “Serbs of Mosaic Faith,” which is developed in Koen’s speeches, merits analytical attention from the standpoint of studying nationalism, and the formation of nation-states in the Balkans, inasmuch as it represents a rarely examined form of direct intervention into the broader societal understanding of the requirements for membership in a nation. The approach to studying nationalism as ideology, developed by Siniša Malešević, points to an analysis of the conceptual structure of argumentation that specific actors present in order to create and maintain the nation as a concrete political project. By relying on such an approach, this article aims to highlight the main ideological elements in Koen’s *Orations*, precisely by viewing the ideological formulation of “Serbs of Mosaic faith” as a sort of political project directed towards the national integration of the Jewish population into the broader project of Serbian nationalism.

Malešević's emphasis on examining the discursive element of national ideologies may be more clearly analytically anchored by the contextualist approach associated with the study of the history of political thought. One of the most prominent representatives of contextualism, John Pocock, keenly highlighted that various social environments produce their respective "languages" which may be deployed to discuss politics, and that obtaining a grasp of such languages is a necessary condition of understanding the social act which the political text (spoken or written) represents (Pocock 2009, 3–19). The specific ideological repertoire which Koen developed in the course of his orations is not merely a reflection of an individual's particular national ideology, but also the socio-historical context in which it appeared as a speech and political act: Serbia towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the position of its Jewish population. By means of a closer identification of the context in which Koen's ideological "language" finds its meaning and its audience, the understanding of available discursive elements it relies on is deepened, as is that of the possible reach of such an integrationist project in its own time.

### **METHODOLOGICAL NOTES: NATIONAL INTEGRATION AS LINGUISTIC PRACTICE**

National integration, defined as the process by which groups wholly or partly merge into national societies so as to support the political organization of the national state (Birch 2012, 36–51), is a fertile area for the study of ideological and discursive practices that, in the process, essentially (re)define the boundaries of the notion of a particular nation. Given the theoretical perspective of nationalism theorists who place these practices at the centre of their study of nationalism as the "dominant ideology of modernity" (Malešević 2006, 5) or as the prevailing framework for understanding social reality (Brubaker 2004), there is a tendency to devote most of the attention to elite or institutional actors who are socially positioned to most influence the dominant understanding of the national.

Focusing on elite actors, although necessary for understanding the direction of national ideologies, marginalises actors who have a much weaker capacity to carry out their discursive interventions at the level of broader social practices. Given their position, such actors cannot be seen as equal participants in the process of building a national ideology,

but it is precisely by analysing the discourses they develop from a position of marginality that the conceptual boundaries and unexplored discursive spaces which implicitly arise within its framework can be better established.

When it comes to minority groups, the term “national integration” denotes a different process from the consolidation of a national group around common, majority-held characteristics. As Brubaker notes, the periods immediately following the establishment of nation-states in Europe are characterized by “nationalising” policies of the state elite, aimed at the national homogenisation of the population in accordance with very specific ethno-cultural definitions (Brubaker 2009, 5). Those parts of the population that remain outside these ethno-cultural boundaries, not covered by the homogenising efforts, can be subjected to, but also opt for, a number of strategies in the context of such nationalism. One of these strategies, national integration, means a certain expansion of the ethno-cultural definition of the nation in order to include previously excluded groups, essentially striving to remove the very categories on the basis of which they were excluded as definitive for the nation, while fully acceding to all other necessary categories. In Brubaker’s terminology, national integration in such a case can be considered a political goal that implies certain changes in the policy of nationalisation, with the requirement that the minority group in question be included in it. The discursive acts of Koen’s Orations are considered, for the purposes of this article, as precisely such a type of social intervention.

Such a view of national integration is in line with one of Brubaker’s fundamental theoretical assumptions, that of nations as a constructed and highly variable category of practice (Brubaker 2009, 7), liable to be changed across time and space through deliberate political action. In contrast with more static conceptions of nations, this view assumes a degree of openness in (re)defining the limits and content of the nation, according to their capacity to affect political change, as exemplified by Koen himself. While this is a definite move towards a “constructionist” approach to nationhood, it is important to stress that such an approach is not completely open-ended. The element of the context, a mainstay of the previously noted contextualist method in the history of political thought, establishes the limits of possible constructions. Like Pocock, representatives of this school share a common stress on political texts as “speech acts” embodied in a concrete social milieu in order to arrive at

plausible explanations of authorial intent and potential impact (Charette and Skjönsberg 2020). Despite divergences between authors grouped under the contextualist label, this shared theoretical orientation informs the present analysis as a more specific complement to Malešević and Brubaker's general insights on nationalism.

The use of linguistic analysis is thus evidently necessary not only because of the author's inability to address the wider community from an elite position, but also in order to study the possibilities of discursive strategies used within an implicit attempt to change the prevailing national ideology, yet with a clear perspective of belonging to the majority nation. The very fact that a particular author assumes the possibility of such a change, speaking and writing in his own historical context, is revealing of historically possible directions not only of the conceptualization of Serbian nationality in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, but also of national self-understanding and political advocacy of Jewish minorities of the same period.

## DAVID A. KOEN'S SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT

### Relations between Serbian nationalism and Jewry

The political examination of the position of Jews in Serbia is closely linked to the very process of its emergence as a modern state. Restrictions on the rights of Jews by the Serbian authorities appeared as early as the time of formal autonomy within the Ottoman Empire, that is, with the political rise of the Constitutionalists (*Ustavobranitelji*, serb. trans.). As part of their agitation against the rule of Prince Miloš Obrenović, the Constitutionalist program also included the adoption of anti-Jewish regulations due to the competition that Jewish merchants represented to the strata on which the Constitutionalists relied (Hrabak 2009, 317). The essential class basis of this conflict between the early Serbian economic elite and the Jews, in the course of which the former also referred to the national difference of the Jews in relation to the Serbs (Hrabak 2009, 319), already in this period influenced the consolidation of these differences as national, since it was precisely this economic elite that was poised to shape the directions of the national ideology.

The calls to suppress the activities of Jewish merchants, which found their expression in state regulations, therefore simultaneously reinforced the conceptual and legal separation of Jews and Serbs.

Developing beyond purely economic competition, at the beginning of the second reign of Prince Mihailo Obrenović in 1860, this separation and the “foreign” character of the Jewish population were also emphasized by the leader of the Serbian liberals, Jevrem Grujić, who made use of the cause of “national liberation from foreigners” (Radenić 1992, 9–10). The separation was, however, also emphasized by the Jews in Belgrade themselves during the same period, as shown by their petitions to the prince on behalf of the “Israelite nation dwelling in Serbia” requesting equal civil rights with the Serbs (Lebl 2001, 98–99). This period also saw the emergence of provocative articles against Jews in the newspaper *Svetovid*, whereby anti-Semitic tropes also became part of public discourse in Serbian society (Lebl 2001, 117–124).

During the negotiations at the Berlin Congress of 1878, the legal equality of Jews was set as a precondition for international recognition of Serbia’s independence, at the initiative of Waddington, the French delegate, which was largely accepted by other European powers, with the notable exception of Russia (Hrabak 2009, 413). Although the Serbian leadership proclaimed itself committed to implementing the provisions and thus gained international recognition of the new state immediately after the Congress, in practice, it was only ten years later, thanks to various political disputes, that this issue was truly resolved in favour of full equality with the new constitution of 1888. Public discussion on this issue was marked both by the perception of interference by foreign governments and non-governmental actors such as the Alliance Israélite Universelle, and by the use of anti-Semitism by the political opposition to the government of Jovan Ristić (Lebl 2001, 146–148).

In addition to purely political leaders, a significant contribution to the shaping of the Serbian national program in the religious sphere should also be attributed to the Serbian Orthodox Church. Before gaining state independence, Serbs on both sides of the Ottoman-Habsburg border were grouped according to their faith into Orthodox millets (in the case of the late Ottoman Empire), or under the jurisdiction of the Karlov patriarchs (in the case of the Habsburg Monarchy). Although neither the millet system nor the Serbian Orthodox Church in the Habsburg territories still represents expressions of national institutions within the multiethnic empires, their existence did influence the future inclusion of Orthodoxy as an integral part of Serbianness in the national sense. With the acquisition of autonomy within the Ottoman Empire, an initiative for an autocephalous Serbian Church was launched, as part of a broader

process of transforming the Church into a national institution that would participate in the construction of a nation-state (Falina 2023, 26–29). Although the Church itself was increasingly subordinated to state authorities in the process of state-building, its closeness to the national project in a very religiously homogeneous Serbia until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was also expressed through the discursive repertoire of national ideology, emphasizing the saintly character of Serbian medieval rulers and the religious dimension of the myth of the Battle of Kosovo (Falina 2023, 29–30). The introduction of Orthodoxy as a feature of national "Serbhood", although not directly creating a negative attitude towards the Jewish population, did contribute to its exclusion from the mainstream of observation of Serbian nationality. It is important to note here that the church hierarchy itself had a relatively minor part in this process, yet due to the long-standing connection between Eastern Orthodoxy and the Church it is not possible to disregard it as a channel of dissemination of the nascent dominant ideology.

This brief overview of the main factors that shaped the relationship of Jews towards Serbian nationality in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century provides a framework for understanding the context in which David A. Koen's Orations were written. Primarily, it becomes clear that the inclusion of Jews in Serbian nationality represented a significant innovation in a conceptual sense, not only because of the absence of previous attempts to do so, but also because of the closeness of "Serbhood" with adherence to the Serbian Orthodox Church. This study of the content of Orations is thus directed towards exploring interventions aimed at reshaping and conceptually expanding the Serbian national project so that the Jewish population of Serbia would come to be included in it.

### **Biographical background**

Biographical information about David A. Koen has been little studied in historiography to date, with only a small amount of information being repeated in various historiographical sources. According to the earliest available source, Koen was born in 1854 in Belgrade and became the first lawyer among Belgrade's Jews, graduating from the Faculty of Law at the Great School in Belgrade (Hrček 2014, 85). According to the same source, Koen also sent the manuscript of the Orations to Milan Đ. Milićević, who was already a well-known cultural and scientific figure at the time. According to the text of his Orations and according

to Ženi Lebl, on the occasion of the official emancipation of Jews in Serbia following the promulgation of the 1888 Constitution, he visited several cities, including Niš, primarily with the aim of raising funds for impoverished high school students and the Serbian-Jewish Youth Association (Lebl 2003, 137–152). After publishing the Orations, Koen published the book *God Protects Serbia: The Apotheosis of Serbian Genius in the Light of Religion* in 1915, only to be shortly thereafter arrested during the Bulgarian wartime occupation of Niš and, according to available sources, likely executed (Hrček 2014, 86).

Despite the limited availability of biographical data, which constitutes a significant part of the contextualist approach in the history of political thought, it is possible to roughly establish the social context of Koen's life. The most significant factors, his legal profession and the recorded correspondence with Milićević as a prominent intellectual, testify to the possibility of accessing the education and language characteristic of the emerging stratum of intellectuals in Serbia at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. While he himself did not belong to the commercial or political elite of the majority group, such proximity to the cultural or intellectual elite, clearly evident from the very fact of a legal education and practice, for the purposes of this research can be considered as an important determinant for the intellectual formation of a certain conception of national integration.

## THE NATIONAL THOUGHT OF DAVID A. KOEN

### Conceptual organisation of society

Starting from the introductory remarks in his book of orations, Koen devotes himself to what Malešević calls the “conceptual organization of society,” that is, the discursive presentation of the foundations of society in which he develops his own ideological intervention. In accordance with the integrative orientation implied by the very use of the term “Serbs of Mosaic faith,” Koen seeks to present the closeness and possibility of Jewish integration through a significant emphasis on the love of freedom and tolerance within Serbian society, but also as part of the national character.

The first of the principal themes that Koen repeatedly utilises is precisely that of a “completely tolerant fatherland of Serbia” (Koen 1897, 3). The role of “tolerance” in Koen's verbal repertoire extends in equal

measure to the state itself, its population, and also to the rulers, regardless of the person serving as head of state. The discourse of tolerance is closely linked to the broader concept of "progress" understood in accordance with Enlightenment principles. Thus, for Koen, Serbia is permeated by "the spirit of equality, freedom, and brotherhood without distinction of religion or nationality" (Koen 1897, 8), indirectly alluding to the recognizable themes of the French Revolution of 1789. Koen locates the very origins of this Serbian tolerance in different places and in different aspects of his understanding of "Serbhood"; on occasions of religious significance, it may be the recognition of monotheistic unity and the expression of Christian principles among the majority Orthodox people (Koen 1897, 9), at other times it may be the "skilfulness of mind" of the Serbian people, but also a constitutional-legal achievement as an expression of deep convictions that do not stem exclusively from qualities of character (Koen 1897, 33).

Another theme that characterizes Koen's descriptions of Serbian society is a link to the main current of the existing Serbian national project: the heroism and suffering of the Serbian people in the struggle for national aims. These themes, although not directly related to Jewish matters, are significant in underpinning the general patriotic character of the Orations, which simultaneously call on the majority population to recognize Jews as compatriots, and Jews to accede to a nation with such qualities. For these purposes, Koen does not merely repeatedly emphasise heroism, endurance, and perseverance as features of the Serbian national character, but also reaches for themes such as the Battle of Kosovo (Koen 1897, 30), which were already represented in Serbian national rhetoric at that time.

A significant place in Koen's image of Serbian society is also reserved for his emphasis on religion as an all-pervading factor in the structure of the nation and society. In addition to tolerance and marked morality, the Serbian nation is conceived as a distinctly religious one, with an exclusively positive relationship towards that religiosity. The fact that the author locates religious affiliation as the only potential point of separation between the "Serbs of Mosaic faith" and the rest of the Serbian nation does not lead him to neglect religious discourse in favour of emphasizing other common features, but rather to highlight the greatest possible unity on this issue as well. Thus, the religious component in Koen's understanding of "Serbhood" is not Eastern Orthodox Christianity, but the monotheistic and Old Testament heritage

that it shares with Judaism. Emphasising a more broadly understood belief in God as part of the national program, while insisting that it is the same God for both religious communities (Koen 1897, 9), this discursive move testifies both to the impossibility of conceptually separating religious discourse from national discourse in the given context, and to the recognition of its integrative and mobilizing value within one's own program of national integration.

Religious language also leads to the occasional use of religious themes in the legitimisation not only of the nation-state and its leadership, but also of specific political goals such as "Piedmontist" ambitions for territorial expansion. King Aleksandar Obrenović is thus portrayed as "the great Serb ordained by God", while patriotism is defined as "the ideal, divinely-given, and most sacred fanaticism" (Koen 1897, 31). The expansion of the state's territory, in the name of "the unification of Serbdom", on the basis of religious language also takes on a somewhat messianic character, articulated as part of the mission entrusted to the Serb people by God, with the aim of advancing humanity and glorifying God's splendour and honour (Koen 1897, 61).

### **Individual and collective actors**

Koen's conception of "Serbs of Mosaic faith" assumes significant roles for two collective actors, namely Jews and the majority Serb population, as well as for individual actors embodied in the contemporaneous leaders of the Serbian state. Although according to the title of the book, the orations as such are primarily addressed to Jewish youth in Serbia, in practice, they were delivered publicly, in front of mixed audiences, which shaped the spectrum of political messages conveyed on these occasions. Recognising that these were two audiences, despite the author's efforts to integrate them into a single national community, the occasions on which he primarily addresses Jews are recognisably distinct, as opposed to those in which he addresses Serbs in the narrowest sense.

When it comes to Jews, or rather "Serbs of Moses," "Serbian Jews," or "Serbs of Mosaic faith," Koen positions them as a group that needs to realise or "become conscious" of their belonging to the national community and makes various normative demands of them. Thus, in the case of a speech on the occasion of raising funds for the construction of a synagogue in Šabac, Koen demands that Jews must take equal

part in "sacrifices" for the purpose of "maintaining and improving our national and state survival", which would include their use of Serbian as their mother tongue, and that, in addition to their faith, "they cherish within themselves in the main the same thoughts and feelings as all other Serbs in this country" (Koen 1897, 18–20). The "Serbs of Mosaic faith" themselves thus participate in their own integration not as a group of foreigners who are to be included in the nation, but through a "recognition" of their own a priori belonging to the Serbian national and state community by means of appropriate signs of patriotism.

Serbian rulers, both historical and Koen's contemporaries, appear as significant actors in the Orations. The role of rulers is seen in Koen's national ideology as significant both for the construction of the state itself, the nation, and the national spirit, and for the more specific program of national integration being developed by Koen himself. Prince Miloš Obrenović thus has the role of "the people's savior" (Koen 1897, 51), but also of the ruler who displayed "unparalleled tolerance" towards the Mosaic Serbs (Koen 1897, 42). The entire Obrenović dynasty, yet also the regency government during the minority of King Alexander (Koen 1897, 43), are therefore presented as simultaneously crucial actors in the national revival and guaranteeing freedom and tolerance towards the Jewish population, which, according to Koen, are mutually inseparable goals.

### **Characteristics and use of Koen's language**

In line with the author's already indicated orientation towards Serbian nationalism and patriotism, the language of Koen's Orations is largely in line with the formulations already present in Serbian national thought of his time. During the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Serbian intellectuals, building on the work of Vuk Karadžić and Petar II Petrović Njegoš, integrated a certain corpus of traditional epic poetry and mythological-historical themes into the discursive repertoire of the national program (Pavlović and Atanasovski 2016, 357–376). In Koen's Orations, these themes are consistently used in defining Serbian national heritage and value orientation. This included the aforementioned Battle of Kosovo, but also a wider range of themes such as Stefan Nemanja as the founder of Serbian statehood (Koen 1897, 29), Prince Marko as a national hero (Koen 1897, 59), and warmth and exuberance as

characteristics of the national character expressed in folk songs and traditions (Koen 1897, 50).

Another significant element of Koen's "language of nationality" is reflected in the importance it assigns to the role of Serbia as the "Piedmont of the East", that is, the centre of the future "unification of Serbdom" (Koen 1897, 62). As Siniša Malešević points out, this "Piedmontist" discourse in Serbian nationalism, aimed at expanding state borders to areas designated as populated by ethnic Serbs, emerged among Serbian intellectuals in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although it took decades for it to become established outside elite circles (Malešević 2017, 129–150). The presence of such a discourse in Koen's Orations indicates his familiarity with the prevailing currents of national thought, as well as the positioning of his integrationist program in relation to the dominant discourses of the social elite.

The discourse of tolerance and Enlightenment principles, already mentioned as one of the organizing principles of Serbian society, also merits attention as a linguistic choice adapted to the author's integrationist aspirations. In contrast to the adaptation of motifs from medieval history and folkloric heritage, the intellectual legacy of the Enlightenment, especially the Enlightenment conceptions of the nation and citizen, is linked to the very beginnings of the modern national program and the First Serbian Uprising, embodied in influential figures such as Dositej Obradović and Božidar Grujović (alias Teodor Filipović) (Markovich 2013, 209–254). Religious tolerance and the process of including minority religious groups within the nation, as one of the achievements of the French Revolution of 1789, could not have had the same importance in a religiously highly homogeneous Serbia of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in which pre-national patterns of identification followed religious lines, and the subsequent national assimilation of linguistic and ethnic minorities primarily affected those belonging to Eastern Orthodox Christianity (Markovich 2011). However, the very legitimation of these ideas within the national program opened up space for stressing religious tolerance as an integral part of an enlightened Serbian society.

Koen's use of Enlightenment discourse is not isolated from more general laudatory statements about the Serbian people, such as "gifted, tolerant, brave-hearted, and yet devoted to equality and freedom" (Koen 1897, 22), nor is there a noticeable change in its use depending on the composition of the audience before which it was used. The normative

power of Koen's Enlightenment statements is not rooted in a rationalistic explanation or invocation of concepts such as natural law – instead, it is premised on the idea that the values of the Enlightenment are already inherent in the Serbian national character, and do not have to be learned or understood, but are simply spontaneously expressed at certain historical moments. In this way, the integration of religious minorities, which had previously been a relatively less significant theme in a religiously almost homogeneous political community, is not presented as an innovation, but rather an "innate" characteristic of the nation, the realisation of which fulfils the normative requirements of "Serbhood" in the sense of national belonging.

In Koen's addresses, the audience is referred to as "brothers" and "fellow-tribesmen" in almost every speech, regardless of whether the audience is Jewish, Eastern Orthodox, or mixed. This language of "kinship," however, does not reflect a highly developed ethnic and/or biological conception of Serb nationality in the text of the speeches themselves. Koen's willingness to present the "Mosaic Serbs" as "brothers" to all other Serbs does not indicate an implicit recognition of differences in ethnic and, especially, linguistic origin. Although "brothers" in principle, Jews are also referred to as those who "faithfully profess the religion of their forefathers," which separates them from the majority population, while calls for integration by learning the Serbian language and "education in the Serb spirit" also point to clear differences, at least in their initial position, from the mainstream of Serbian folk culture. The reference to prominent Jews in other nation-states and the affirmation of their true affiliation with local nationalities also points to a notion of nationality that is not rigidly ethnically defined through actual kinship ties with the rest of the national community (Koen 1897, 21).

The fact that Koen does not directly elaborate, in any of his speeches, on the exact meaning of this "brotherhood" and "tribal kinship," as well as the aforementioned choice to define certain traits as innate, does not leave sufficient space for establishing their crucial role in his understanding of the common basis of the Serb nation. Even without clearer definitions in the text itself, this ambiguity points to Rogers Brubaker's broader theoretical remarks on the analytical futility of rigidly distinguishing "ethnic" from "civic" nationalism. Problematizing the use of analytically insufficiently examined boundaries between these concepts, Brubaker argues that their ideal-typical, abstract origin, especially when attempting to categorize different "nationalisms" from

case to case, leads either to groupings that are too heterogeneous to be analytically useful, or to too few examples in which it is possible to make a clear division (Brubaker 2004, 132–146). Koen's parallel use of discursive elements that would, in these abstract models, correspond to both types does not, therefore, actually represent contradictions inherent in his thought but rather testifies to the need for a more open perspective on a much broader spectrum of possible linguistic strategies within the framework of his political project.

Lastly, beyond conceptual considerations, the mobilizing and affective power of the language of kinship is entirely consistent with Koen's integrationist perspective, as another form of overcoming differences and stressing the essential unity between minority and majority groups. As a rule, it is precisely such language that is used in calls for displays of national unity, exemplified by declarations of loyalty to the ruling dynasty or predictions of a general national revival.

### **Relationship with counter-ideologies**

Malešević's theoretical framework also includes an exploration of the place of counter-ideologies in the articulation of national ideology, including both those that are potentially "friendly" and those that represent a direct threat (Malešević 2006, 76). In accordance with the integrationist perspective on Koen's sermons, it is possible to label as counter-ideologies those ideological tendencies that were opposed to the political project of including Jews in the broader corpus of the Serbian nation.

The text of Koen's Orations itself does not contain extensive polemical reflections on perceived rival ideologies, insofar as the ideas and practices against which there is a notable critical attitude are not actually presented as a recognizable set of ideas about social reality and action within it, nor as part of the thoughts of certain individuals or organized groups. Instead, what comes closest to Malešević's definition of counter-ideologies are certain phenomena that the author indirectly defines as contrary to the goal of national integration.

The first of these practices refers to the repeatedly mentioned "prejudices inherited from tradition", a term by which Koen designates, in the broadest sense, opposition to the enlightened and tolerant tendencies which he previously equated with the Serb national spirit. Moreover, these "prejudices" are not defined according to their content

or by their representatives, but it is notable that Koen attributes them primarily to his own Jewish community, contrasting them with the ideas of his "Serbian-Jewish Youth Association" (Koen 1897, 4). The second, closely related practice refers to the use of "uncultured Spanish" (Koen 1897, 19), as Koen refers to the Ladino language traditionally spoken by Sephardic Jews, the main group of Jews in Serbia at that time. Given the importance attributed to the adoption of the Serbian language as part of integration, this critical attitude towards a minority language is understandable, although Koen does not argue that its use is part of conscious resistance to integrationist ideas, but rather that it is a consequence of the insufficient education of "women and the elderly" and that it will disappear in the near future.

The peculiarity of Koen's speeches as a reflection of a political program is also reflected in its tacit confrontation with another national program that found its supporters among his contemporaries, prominent individuals in the South Slavic Jewish communities – Zionism. Namely, the year of publication of the book of Koen's speeches was also the year of the first Zionist Congress in Basel, organized primarily through the efforts of Theodor Herzl. At the Congress, David Alkalaj from Belgrade participated as the only representative of Jews from Serbia, and upon his return, he founded the Jewish national association "Zion" (Ristović 2016, 26–50). Offering a completely different conception of the national identity of all Jews, including Serbian ones, the ideology of Zionism advocated the establishment of a Jewish nation and a corresponding national state. Given the historical significance of the Zionist movement in the following decades and its spread among the Jewish communities in Serbia and the first Yugoslav state, Koen's speeches in this context also represent an example of an ideological shibboleth in the attitude of Serbian Jews towards their own national identity.

## CONCLUSION

In studying the process of formation and development of modern nationalism in Serbia and the Balkans, the perspective on nationalism as a specific political ideology directs research towards the study of specific discourses, messages, and concepts on which such an ideology would rest and be maintained as a process. Tracing the connection between social status and the possibility of significant or decisive influence on this process, various theorists focus on the role of elite actors, called

“dominant social actors” by Malešević or “ethnopolitical entrepreneurs” by Brubaker (Malešević 2006, 75; Brubaker 2004, 2). While such a focus provides the clearest insights into the main ideological currents of different nationalisms, shifting the focus towards both the social and intellectual margins of the nation-building process can broaden the understanding of possible directions for the development of the notion of “the national” at particular historical moments, as well as more clearly establish the minimal criteria – both ideological and social – for participation in that process.

David A. Koen’s *Orations Dedicated to the Serb Youth of Mosaic Faith* is precisely one such example of discursive practice from the margins of the broader Serbian national project. Aimed at the integration of the Jewish population into this project, an analysis of the language used points to key points of unity that the author considers necessary for such integration, and to the available linguistic strategies for justifying and advocating for it. The result is a mixture of different, distinct themes, from highlighting a positive national character, invoking an emerging national mythology and supporting the territorial expansion of the nation-state to encompass the entire represented national space, to emphasising tolerance and educational values as the most important for the very possibility of integrating a religious minority, to obliquely condemning traditional practices as a product of backwardness. The issue of Jewish affiliation with the Serb nation is also, in several places, posed as an already existing fact of which one can “become conscious”, implying that the integration project is conceptually already realised, although it also needs to be promoted through measures such as adequate national education of Jews.

Above all, the centrality of the state, its structure, and its rulers, whose descriptions are usually also suffused with religious language, largely confirms Rogers Brubaker’s two aforementioned theses. First, by striving for national homogenization through integration, Koen’s interventions fit into the “nationalizing” discourse in an already established nation-state as the key point of political mobilization and the practice by which it can be sustained. Second, the mixing of seemingly contradictory discourses, such as romantic ideas about the national spirit and tribal kinship on the one hand, as well as the Enlightenment principles of constitutional tolerance and citizenship as the foundation of nationality on the other, testifies to the need for a more nuanced attitude towards a too rigid distinction between “ethnic” and “civic” notions of

the nation in analytical endeavours. Bearing in mind these characteristics of a minority actor's understanding of the national, these findings justify further research on the extent to which these themes were also grounded in the mainstream of national thought, whose bearers came from the elite strata of the cultural-ethnic and religious majority of 19<sup>th</sup> century Serbia. With regards to potential counter-ideologies, this research also marks out the starting points for studying the conceptual tensions between Zionism and national integration into the Serbian nation as two ideological orientations within the same minority community, whose beginnings can be traced back to almost the same historical moment.

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## **„СРБИ МОЈСИЈЕВЕ ВЕРЕ”: АНАЛИЗА „БЕСЕДА” ДАВИДА А. КОЕНА КАО МОДЕЛА ЗА НАЦИОНАЛНУ ИНТЕГРАЦИЈУ ЈЕВРЕЈА**

### **Резиме**

У раду је представљена анализа скупа беседа, које је под насловом „Беседа: посвећене српској омладини Мојсијеве вере” објавио рабин Давид А. Коен 1897. године, као једног модела националне интеграције Јевреја настањених на подручју тадашње Србије у пројекат настајуће српске нације. Теоретски утемељена на увидима о национализму и настанку нације које су развили Синиша Малешевић и Роцерс Брубекер, ова анализа подразумева да је и (ре)дефинисање граница и садржаја српске нације политички процес подложен различитим индивидуалним и институционалним интервенцијама, а везан најпре за настанак модерне српске државе у XIX веку. Ослањајући се на методолошке препоруке тзв. контекстуалистичке школе у историји политичке мисли, велика пажња је посвећена политичком и друштвеном контексту у којем се аутор налазио и који умногоме објашњава његов простор и капацитет да путем својих беседа и текстова интервенише у циљу укључења Јевреја у српски национални пројекат под геслом „Србија Мојсијеве вере”, односно „Срба мојсијеваца”. Након осврта на друштвени положај Јевреја и релативно малобројне биографске податке који упућују на Коенов изразити патриотизам, анализи се подвргава сам садржај текстова. При дефинисању српског друштва у целини, показује се да код Коена преовлађује истицање толерантности, моралности и побожности Срба, те и снажна подршка владару на челу саме државе. У осврту на саме Јевреје у Србији, Коен истиче потребу њиховог „освешћивања” о свом статусу као Срба и укључењу у све токове српског друштва, док се на већинску групу (православних) Срба једнако апелује да препознају чињеницу јеврејске припадности српству. Коенов језик показује изразити патриотски карактер, али и

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двосмислено и наизменично коришћење како језика рационалности и просвећености типичног за просветитељску мисао, тако и језика саплеменства, братства и псеудомесијанства, што одржава променљивости и противречности у националном дискурсу уопште, често и у оквиру истог текста. Коенове „Беседе” тако показују један пример покушаја проширивања националног дискурса са позиције мањинског, неинституционалног актера. Њихов значај се огледа не само у осветљавању мање познатих примера у развоју српског националног дискурса, већ и у указивању на интелектуалне ресурсе на које се једна таква интервенција могла ослонити у Србији крајем XIX века. Она такође показује да је, бар начелно, у времену и месту ауторовог стварања постојао концептуални простор за такву интервенцију, иако је у потоњим годинама и вековима он значајно сужен. Таквим закључком се, између осталог, поткрепљује полазна теза о променљивости националности као политичког процеса и отвара простор за сложенији приступ проучавању развоја како српске, тако и јеврејске националне припадности на простору Србије.

**Кључне речи:** јеврејска интеграција, национална интеграција, Срби Мојсијеве Вере, Давид А. Коен, српски национализам, политички језик

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