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The Muslim woman question in Bosnia and Herzegovina: between Islamic tradition and global modernity

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CHAPTER 1



1. Introduction

Since the late 19th century, public debates about women in Muslim societies have been part of general discussions regarding the relationship between Islam and the West, tradition and modernity, and the role of religion in society. It was during this period that a profound interest was sparked in the conditions of Muslim women, which became an issue of concern both within Islamic and within Western discourses. Recent studies argue that Western criticism of different practices related to women in Muslim societies formed an integral part of justification for colonial interventions and corroborated the Western viewpoint that the Muslim world was in need of thorough socio-cultural transformation according to the Western model.¹ The position of Muslim women was one of the core European arguments in justifying the superiority of Western civilization and this, in turn, had a very clear effect on the development and character of intra-Muslim debates on a set of contested issues related to the roles, status, rights, duties, and visibility of Muslim women. Rather than reflecting the lived experiences of Muslim women, these debates—over what came to be known as “the Muslim woman question”—constructed an essentialized and symbolically charged figure of the Muslim woman through which broader socio-religious anxieties were articulated and contested.²

In the late 19th century, the Muslim woman question emerged as the focal point of Western as well as intra-Muslim debates that involved questions about the principles and values of Islam, the right to interpret Islamic teachings, and the place of Islam in modern world. To this day, the woman question has remained one of the most frequently discussed issues within Muslim societies and is most certainly a topic at the heart of Islamic discourse on tradition, modernity, authenticity, and interpretive authority.³

There is a substantial body of Western academic literature on the Muslim woman question in the Ottoman Empire, the Middle East, and South Asia; however, the discourses on the Muslim woman question have rarely been examined in relation to Balkan Muslims, as they are commonly reduced to clichés of being more liberal and European in their lifestyles. To address this gap, I will examine public debates on the status, duties, and rights of Muslim women in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the first half of the 20th century. In doing so, I intend to highlight the multivocal character of modern Islamic discourses regarding questions related to women at the cultural frontier of Europe and the Muslim world. Moreover, I will demonstrate the significance of these debates within the global debates on the re-

- 1 Lila Abu Lughod, “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others,” *American Anthropologist* 104, no. 3 (2002): 783–790.
- 2 Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (London: Yale University Press, 1992); Alia Al-Saji, “Muslim Women and Rhetoric of Freedom,” in *Constructing the Nation: A Race and Nationalism Reader*, eds. Mariana Ortega and Linda Martin Alcoff (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009), 65–87.
- 3 Juliane Hammer, *American Muslim Women, Religious Authority, and Activism: More Than a Prayer* (Austin: University of Texas, Press, 2012), 11.

evaluation of the meaning of Islamic tradition in modernity. I hold that Muslim debates on issues related to women from the late 19th century globally played a crucial role in reimagining Islamic tradition and articulating varied perspectives on modernity.

1.1. The Modern Islamic Intellectual History of Bosnia and Herzegovina: Identifying Typologies

Islam in Bosnia and Herzegovina is often presented in academic and public discourse as an authentic “European Islam” and a model of tolerance and modernity. Xavier Bougarel warns that such a notion is misleading for two reasons. First, such representations of Islam in Bosnia and Herzegovina implicitly contrasts this “Bosnian” and tolerant Islam with a “non-European Islam” encompassing not only those countries with a Muslim majority, but also the Muslim migrants who settled in western Europe in the second half of the twentieth century.⁴ In this way, Bougarel argues, the notion of natural opposition between Islam and Europe is not deconstructed, but only silenced. Second, and more relevant to this study, is that such representations give an impression of Islam in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a fixed and homogenous whole, thereby overlooking the fact that Islam in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been a plural and changing tradition comprising different views on a range of social, cultural and religious issues—as Islamic traditions elsewhere in the Muslim world.⁵

We will see that a critical examination of Bosnian Muslim discourses regarding the status of women during the first half of the 20th century provides a valuable insight into the diversity of intellectual positions regarding Islamic tradition and modernity.

Defining and categorizing specific intellectual positions within Bosnian Islamic discourse is a challenging task, burdened by decades of scholarly efforts to define intellectual tendencies within modern Islamic thought in general and among Bosnian Muslims in particular. These efforts are marked by the use of terms like reformism, modernism, traditionalism, conservatism, Islamism, revivalism, and fundamentalism, which not only were often defined in a unprecise manner, but are also interpreted differently by scholars.⁶ My classification of Islamic intellectual trends in Bosnia and Herzegovina serves the purpose of clarification but is always subject to Kurzman’s remark that various interpretations of the

4 Xavier Bougarel, “Balkan Muslim Diasporas and the Idea of a ‘European Islam,’ ” in *Balkan Currents. Essays in Honour of Kjell Magnusson*, eds. Tomislav Dulić et al. (Uppsala: Uppsala Multiethnic Papers 49, 2005). 147–165.

5 Xavier Bougarel, “Bosnian Islam as ‘European Islam’: Limits and Shifts of a Concept,” in *Islam in Europe. Diversity, Identity and Influence*, eds. Aziz 'Azmah and Effie Fokas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007), 96–97.

6 To learn more about the terms and categorizations used to describe Islamic thought in Bosnia and Herzegovina see Fikret Karčić, *Društveno-pravni aspekt islamskog reformizma: Pokret za reformu šerijatskog prava i njegov odjek u Jugoslaviji i prvoj polovini XX vijeka* (Sarajevo: Islamski teološki fakultet, 1990), 199–200; Alexandre Popovic, “Muslim Intellectuals in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the Twentieth Century: Continuities and Changes,” in *Intellectuals in the Modern Islamic World: Transmission, Transformation, Communication*, eds. Stéphane A. Dudoignon, Hisao Komatsu, and Yasushi Kosugi (London; New York: Routledge, 2006), 212.

Islamic tradition “overlap and intertwine and should not be considered mutually exclusive or internally homogenous but as heuristic devices which provide insight into the history of Islamic discourse.”⁷

I identify three main intellectual positions within Bosnian Islamic thought during the period under consideration: reformism, conservatism, and revivalism, which will be discussed in more detail below. This categorization is also congruent with the global development of the Islamic intellectual thought from the late 19th century.⁸

In examining the modern intellectual currents that developed among Muslims it is also necessary to recognize secular modernism as a distinct intellectual orientation that emerged globally in the early 20th century. Secular modernism represents a radical departure from traditional Islamic thought by advocating for a separation of religious beliefs from political and social affairs. Nevertheless, secular modernism will receive little attention in this study because it was mostly the Islamic discourses that played a pivotal role in shaping the intellectual landscape of the Muslim public sphere in Bosnia. Certainly, discourses like secular modernism or nationalism played a role as well but as I will argue, Bosnian Muslim authors from the late 19th and early 20th centuries incorporated them into Islamic discourse.

In this study, I will examine how each of these three intellectual positions of reformism, conservatism, and revivalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina used the woman question to justify their perspectives on authentic Islam and to position themselves as the sole reliable interpreters of their tradition. It is important to note that, while I will analyse each viewpoint, I place particular emphasis on the reformist position as reformists not only initiated Bosnian Muslim discussions on the woman question but also, as reformists in other parts of the Muslim world, framed it within the broader issues of authenticity and authority in Islam and the place of Islam in modernity. Reformists framed their distinctive view of Muslim women’s roles, rights, and duties as integral to authentic Islamic teaching, establishing themselves as the legitimate interpreters of Islam. The reformists’ perspective set the stage for the Bosnian Muslim discussions, and their framing had a lasting impact on how conservatives and revivalists approached these topics. Conservative and revivalist

7 Charles Kurzman, “Introduction. Liberal Islam and its Islamic Context,” *Liberal Islam: A Sourcebook*, ed. Charles Kurzman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 5.

8 Given the variety of terminology and their nuanced interpretations used in scholarly discussions concerning Muslim intellectual history since the late 19th century, it presents a considerable challenge to compare diverse intellectual stances within the global Muslim intellectual community. However, a common characteristic of diverse academic approaches to modern Muslim intellectual history is that they generally identify distinct intellectual viewpoints that are religiously oriented, each with its own unique perspectives on the Islamic heritage, its foundations, and Islam’s place in modernity. Additionally, scholarly research also acknowledges the presence of a separate secular intellectual movement that intentionally refrains from emphasizing the role of Islam in the social, legal, and political life of Muslims. See: William Shepard, “The Diversity of Islamic Thought: Towards a Typology,” in *Islamic Thought in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Suha Taji-Farouki and Basheer M. Nafi (London: Tauris 2004), 61–103; Simon Wood, “Modernists and their opponents: Reading Islam”, in *Routledge Handbook on Early Islam*, ed. Herbert Berg (New York: Routledge, 2018), 241–257.

thinkers were compelled to respond within this framework, either by challenging reformist interpretations or by asserting their own vision of authentic Muslim womanhood. By emphasizing the reformists' initial framing, I highlight how their influence structured the terms of the discussion, allowing for a clearer analysis of conservative and revivalist responses as they engaged with or contested reformist ideas. In this way, the reformist perspective is woven throughout the discussion, not to overshadow other voices but to establish the historical and intellectual foundation for the debate.

This study will demonstrate how these three intellectual positions—reformism, conservatism, and revivalism—not only used the woman question to delineate their relationship with Europe, whether real or imagined, as well as their local political and social landscapes, but also to draw internal boundaries among Muslims.

The examination of Muslim public debates on the woman question in the early 20th century in Bosnian context allows us to see that Muslim intellectual development in this period was much more complex and multifaceted than the simplistic dichotomy of “secular versus religious” or “Western versus Oriental” suggests. In most cases, these debates cantered on the interpretation of Islamic textual foundations and tradition rather than categorical acceptance or rejection of Western values.

1.1.1. Reformism

The term reformism in this study designates the intellectual trend that characterizes Muslim authors of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century who, rooted in the Islamic tradition of *ijtihād* (that is in tradition of “invoking and using individual informed judgment in interpreting the fundamental principles of Islam”⁹), as well as in the tradition of renewal (*tajdīd*) and reform (*iṣlāḥ*) of Islam, advocated reinterpretation of Islamic norms, values and institutions as well as overall sociocultural and political reforms.¹⁰ The main characteristics of this discourse are: a critical stance towards the class of religious scholars; the advocacy of the return to true Islam as enshrined in the textual sources of Islam; a focus on reason and rational interpretation of the Islamic sources, as well as a general attitude regarding the

9 John O. Voll, “Foundations for Renewal and Reform: Islamic Movements in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” in *The Oxford History of Islam*, ed. John L. Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 509.

10 For more on the nature of reformism see: John O. Voll, “Renewal and Reform in Islamic History: *Tajdīd* and *Iṣlāḥ*,” in *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, ed. John Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 32–47; Fazlur Rahman, “Revival and Reform in Islam,” in *Cambridge History of Islam* 2B, eds. Peter M. Holt, Ann K. S. Lambton, and Bernard Lewis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 632–656; Samira Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition: Reform, Rationality, and Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009); Dietrich Jung, “Islamism, Islamic Modernism and the Search for Modern Authenticity in an Imaginary Past,” *Religions* 12, no. 11 (2021): 1–13; Florian Zemmin, *Modernity in Islamic Tradition: The Concept of ‘Society’ in the Journal al-Manar (Cairo, 1898–1940)*, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2018).

compatibility between Islam and ideas of European modernity, often expressed through the notion of the Islamic origin of modern European ideas.¹¹

In the field of Islamic intellectual history, scholars often use the terms “Islamic reformism” and “Islamic modernism” interchangeably.¹² Others, however, make a distinction between these two concepts. In such cases, the term “Islamic modernism” tends to be promoted by secular educated intellectuals that attempted to modernize their societies without complete abandonment of Islam, while the term “Islamic reformism” is promoted by religious scholars, that is to say ‘*ulamā*’.¹³

In this study, I do not explicitly differentiate between secular (or: “modernist”) and religious reformists. This study uses the term reformists to designate all authors whose advocacy of sociocultural, political, and religious reforms is situated within a discourse that aims at revitalizing the “true” Islam in order to ensure progress of Muslims in the modern world, regardless of whether such authors were members of the class of religious scholars or secular intelligentsia. The use of the term “Islamic modernism” is intentionally avoided as it often implies that it was primarily intended to establish compatibility between Islam and modernity, or to Westernize Islam, and therefore implies that it did not represent authentic Islam. I find that the term reformism more effectively describes Muslim authors who advocated socio-cultural and religious reform based on a revitalizing the essence of Islam and who had ambivalent views on Western modernity. In Bosnia, reformists, regardless of whether they belonged to the class of religious scholars or not, rooted their debates within the Islamic tradition, within which they sought answers to the questions posed by deep socio-political and cultural changes at the global and local level. Individuals with secular educational backgrounds were well-known and essential for the growth of Bosnian Islamic reformism and for the emergence of the Muslim woman question as one of the main themes that dominated Bosnian Muslim public sphere in the early 20th century. Notable examples are the Bosnian Muslim scholar, poet, and politician with a degree in Oriental languages from Vienna University Safvet-beg Bašagić (1870–1934), novelist and social activist Edhem Mulabdić (1862–1954), Muslim intellectual Osman Nuri Hadžić (1869–1937) who completed his higher education at universities in Vienna and Zagreb, journalist Dževad Sulejmanpašić (1893–1876) who attended Vienna University, Hamdija Mulić (1881–1944), a graduate of Sarajevo’s *Dar-ul-Muallimin* and the first Muslim pedagogue in Bosnia, Mehmed

11 Shireen T. Hunter, “Introduction,” in *Reformist Voices of Islam: Mediating Islam and Modernity*, ed. Shireen T. Hunter (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2008), 3–32.

12 See Karčić, *Društveno-pravni aspekt islamskog reformizma* and Fikret Karčić, “The Reform of Shari’a Courts and Islamic Law in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1918–1941,” in *Islam in Inter-War Europe*, eds. Nathalie Clayer and Eric Germain (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 253–270. See also works of Charles Kurzman and Omid Safi who have used the term Islamic modernism generally for modern Islamic reformist thought. Charles Kurzman, “Introduction,” in *Modernist Islam: A Source Book*, ed. Charles Kurzman (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2002), 3–27; Omid Safi, “Introduction: Islamic Modernism and Challenge of Reform,” in *Voices of Islam: Voices of Change*, ed. Omid Safi (London: Praeger 2007), xvii.

13 Ira Marvin Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 459; 466; 820.

Begović (1904–1990), the first *sharī'a* law professor at the Faculty of Law of Belgrade University who received his PhD in Algeria in 1930, and Šukrija Alagić (1881–1936), a well-known Muslim author educated in Sarajevo and Vienna who was responsible for the first translation of a section of *Tafsīr al-Manār* in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Among the Muslim reformists with a higher religious education background who played an important role in the mentioned issues, it is important to mention Džemaludin Čaušević (1870–1938), who graduated from the Law School (*Mekteb-i Hukuk*) in Istanbul and served as Reis-ul-ulema (the supreme Islamic religious authority in Bosnia and Herzegovina) from 1914 to 1930, Husein Đozo (1912–1982), a graduate of al-Azhar University of Cairo who played a vital role in the development of Islamic intellectual thought, and Abdulah Ajni Bušatlić (1871–1946), a graduate from the Higher Sharī'a School established by the Habsburg authorities in 1887 in Sarajevo.

In most studies, and in particular in the Yugoslav historiography, Muslim reformists were usually presented as an enlightened element within the otherwise conservative Muslim community, and as members of the growing urban, secular, educated intelligentsia within the emerging Muslim bourgeoisie. Conversely, traditionally educated religious scholars were considered backward and ignorant, and part of the religious and feudal classes.¹⁴ More recent research demonstrates that such assumptions are untenable in the light of the intellectual biographies of Muslim intellectuals and complex relationship within the circle of religious scholars. The biographies of prominent champions of reformist thought such as the Safvet-beg Bašagić, Osman Nuri Hadžić, and Edhem Mulabdić highlight their varied educational backgrounds. They were intellectuals who had grown up under two empires: the Ottoman and Habsburg empires. As such they incorporated different forms of traditional Muslim education at home, elements of late Ottoman primary and religious education, as well as instruction provided by new public institutions established after the Austro-Hungarian occupation of 1878.¹⁵ This unique blend of different educational influences allowed them to gain access to both traditional Islamic knowledge and modern European thought, but also to articulate a form of identity shaped by diverse cultural and intellectual influences. Additionally, a close reading of Bosnian intra-Muslim debates from the period under the research draws attention to the diversity of viewpoints among the

14 For more about these understanding of the Muslim intellectual development in Bosnia and Herzegovina see: Leyla Amzi-Erdoğdular, "Afterlife of Empire: Muslim-Ottoman Relations in Habsburg Bosnia Herzegovina" (PhD diss, Columbia University, 2013), 216–217. The author has since published this work as a book: *Afterlife of Empire: Muslim-Ottoman Relations in Habsburg Bosnia Herzegovina* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2023). See also: Xavier Bougarel, "Farewell to the Ottoman Legacy? Islamic Reformism and Revivalism in Inter-War Bosnia-Herzegovina," in *Islam in Inter-War Europe*, eds. Nathalie Clayer and Eric Germain (London: Hurst, 2008), 1, accessed December 1, 2022, https://shs.hal.science/file/index/docid/706274/filename/Farewell_to_the_Ottoman_Legacy.pdf

15 Dennis Dierks, "Scripting, Translating, and Narrating Reform. Making Muslim Reformism in the European Peripheries of the Muslim World at the Turn of the 20th Century," in *Knowledge on the Move in a Transottoman Perspective: Dynamics of Intellectual Exchange from the Fifteenth to the Early Twentieth Century*, eds. Evelin Dierauff et al. (Goettingen: V & R Unipress, 2021), 173.

class of Islamic scholars over the true nature of Islam, demonstrating that there have been various approaches to interpreting and applying Islamic teachings in the modern context.¹⁶ Therefore, it would be inaccurate to view religious scholars as a homogeneous group that had an antagonistic relationship with the ideas of European modernity and insisted upon preserving inherited institutions.

1.1.2. Conservatism

Conservatism, which in academic scholarship is also frequently referred to as traditionalism, is the term I use for the intellectual trend which is primarily characterized by complete reliance upon classic exegetical and legal tradition of Islam and insistence on preserving inherited institutions, doctrines and practices that are deemed authentically Islamic.

An essential element of the conservative view as expounded in this study is a sceptical attitude towards any innovation in religious thought or practice, which is viewed as a “deviation” or (*bida*). This scepticism has not gone unnoticed by their reformist contemporaries, who see it as a reflection of a lack of understanding of the “true” Islamic principles, as well as a lack of knowledge about the developments in the modern world. As I will demonstrate in the following chapters, conservative scepticism and criticism of socio-cultural change and religious reforms advocated by reformists was not simply a matter of ignorance but was closely linked to a concern that reforms of traditional practices and institutions, particularly those pertaining to women, might have unintended, undesirable consequences. These included the erosion of moral values, the fragmentation of families, or the potential dilution of religious teachings.

The majority of Bosnian Muslim religious scholars espoused conservative viewpoints; however, as previously stated, they faced considerable opposition within their own ranks. For that reason, we must be careful not to use the term conservatives for the class of ‘*ulamā*’ in general.

The involvement of this intellectual trend into Bosnian public debates became apparent in the late 1920s, when conservative scholars began active dialogue and confrontations with reformist circles through the printed press. Among conservative Muslim scholars active in public discussions about socio-religious and cultural issues were Ibrahim Haki Čokić (1871–1948), Ahmed Lutfi Čokić (1878–1933), Ali Riza Karabeg (1873–1944), and Sejfullah Proho (1859–1933).¹⁷

16 Amzi-Erdoğdular, “Afterlife of Empire,” 214–218.

17 For more on these scholars see: Šefik Kurdić, “Percepcija sunneta u bošnjačkih tradicionalista,” *Islamska misao: Godišnjak Fakulteta za islamske studije u Novom Pazaru*, no.3 (2009): 19–21; Adnan Jahić, *Hikmet: Riječ tradicionalne uleme u Bosni i Hercegovini* (Tuzla: Bošnjačka zajednica kulture Preporod, Općinsko društvo Tuzla, 2004).

1.1.3. Revivalism

The term Islamic revivalism refers to an ideological trend that stresses the centrality of Islam in all areas of Muslim life, including family, society, economics, and politics.

Today, revivalism is used as an umbrella term, encompassing diverse trends across different periods. It includes the late 18th and early 19th puritanical movements in Islam that focused on the internal moral and religious decline on Muslims, early 20th century revivalism that was mainly focused on political, social, and moral reform in response to colonialism and secularism, and contemporary movements that emphasize personal and communal piety.¹⁸

Scholars offer different perspectives on the relationship between early 20th century revivalism and reformism. Some scholars view early 20th century revivalism as a Muslim response to the secularist tendencies of the interwar period and Islamic reformism. Others, however, underline that revivalism is rooted in modern Islamic reformism, with which it shares a critical attitude towards the complete adherence to Islamic classical tradition, along with an emphasis on the importance of engaging directly with Islamic texts, particularly the Qur'ān.¹⁹

For the purpose of this study, I set revivalists apart from reformists because of their literal interpretation of Islamic foundational texts, their clear differentiation between Islamic and modern Western values, and their belief in the self-sufficiency of Islam. In a similar fashion to conservatives, revivalists saw the penetration of Western values as the primary cause of Muslims' moral decline and saw the moral renewal of Muslims as the main goal of their mission.

Revivalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina appeared in the late 1930s and was closely associated with a group of young Muslim scholars who were educated at al-Azhar University in Cairo during the interwar period. They gathered around the prolific scholar Mehmed Handžić (1906–1944), and the Sarajevo society *El-Hidaje* that was composed of young, socially-engaged Islamic scholars who were deeply concerned with the preservation of Muslim morality and identity that were perceived as being under threat due to the increasing influence of secularism and materialism.²⁰ This society, established in 1936, had as its goal to bring Muslims back to their faith, to combat materialism, educate young Muslims, and enhance the social and religious significance of religious institutions and scholars.²¹

18 More about early 20th century revivalism, its origin and later developments can be found in: Ira Lapidus, "Islamic Revival and Modernity: the Contemporary Movements and the Historical Paradigms," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 40, 4 (1997): 444–460; Ali Rahnama, *Pioneers of Islamic Revival* (London: Zed Books, 1994); Jan A. Ali, *Islamic Revivalism Encounters the Modern World (A Study of the Tablīgh Jamā'at)* (New Delhi: Sterling, 2012).

19 Rahman, "Revival and Reform in Islam," 648; Karčić, *Društveno-pravni aspekt islamskog reformizma*, 103–108.

20 "Prva riječ," *El-Hidaje* 1, no. 1 (1936): 3.

21 "Prva riječ," 2–4.

Although founded by young religious scholars, it was presented as an alternative to the class of established scholars, and it became a movement to preserve Islamic religious and moral values.²²

Some of the most prominent representatives of this trend, in addition to Handžić, were Kasim Dobrača (1910–1979), Alija Aganović (1902–1961) and Ibrahim Trebinjac (1912–1982). The society is regarded as being close to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.²³ A clear indication of this ideological inclination can be found in the texts published in the society's journal *El-Hidaje* which extensively covered the activities of the Society of the Muslim Brotherhood.²⁴

1.2. Setting the Stage: Framing Debates on the Woman Question in a Time of Transformation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

During the first half of the 20th century, the woman question became a key socio-cultural and religious issue among the Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The discussions on the Muslim woman's ontological status, her position in the family and in the larger community were closely related to the public debates about the cultural status of Bosnian Muslims and their identity. In order to understand these debates, some historical background is needed, whereby we must pay attention to the fact that Bosnia during the relatively short period under discussion here has experienced the succession of Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, and Yugoslavian rule.

1.2.1. The Rise of Muslim Modernity in Ottoman and Habsburg Bosnia

Bosnian Muslims began reflecting on their cultural and religious situation in the late Ottoman period in the 19th century, as evidenced by the first journals that were established during this time as part of Ottoman modernization project. These discussions and

22 Xavier Bougarel, *Islam and Nationhood in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Surviving Empires* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 48–49; Emily Greble, *Muslims and the Making of Modern Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 195; Enes Karić, "Izetbegović svojim mišljenjem ne pripada 'Mladim muslimanima,'" in *Islam i muslimani pred savremenim izazovima. Hrestomatija tekstova, eseja i intervjuva*, ed. Enes Karić (Sarajevo: Savremeni islamski mislioci, 2009), 263. For more on *El-Hidaje's* understanding of the role and responsibility of religious scholars, *ulamā*, for the backwardness of Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina see: Mustafa Brkić, "Uloga vođa i inteligencije," *El-Hidaje* 6, no. 12 (1943): 342–346; Kasim Dobrača, "Ulema. Njena uloga, odgovornost i mogućnost njenog rada," *El-Hidaje* 4, no. 9/11 (1941): 224–233.

23 Xavier Bougarel, "The Diasporic Experience as Opportunity and Challenge for the Islamic Tradition of Bosniaks" in *Both Muslim and European: Diasporic and Migrant Identities of Bosniaks*, ed. Dževada Šuško (Leiden; Boston: Brill 2019), 59.

24 Fabio Giomi, *Making Muslim Women European: Voluntary Associations, Gender, and Islam in Post-Ottoman Bosnia and Yugoslavia (1878–1941)* (Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 2021), 340.

introspections continued and intensified after the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1878.²⁵

In the new socio-political context after 1878, and particularly after the Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908, Bosnian Muslims gradually started to consider Europe not as an external category or a threat (as they might have done from an Ottoman perspective), but rather as a political and cultural framework of which they were becoming part. This new situation compelled them to rethink their own identity and the relationship between the perceived dualism of Islamic tradition and European modernity. The Berlin Congress of 1878 that reshaped the Balkans after the Russo-Turkish War is an event that has been described in the literature in terms of crisis, shock, and loss, caused by a radical change that turned Bosnian Muslims into a minority within the Austro-Hungarian Empire that was Central European as well as Christian.²⁶ Yet, this shock was processed in silence in the first decades of Austro-Hungarian rule that had started in 1878.²⁷

It was not until the turn of the 19th into the 20th century that there was a significant development of Muslim intellectual life and the initiation of public discussions regarding the socio-cultural, religious, and political status of Muslims and their future in the Habsburg Empire.

This intellectual development was directly linked to the emergence of Islamic reformism in Bosnia and Herzegovina that brought together a new generation of Muslim intellectuals educated at European universities and the reform-minded religious scholars. This intellectual movement played a vital role in the development of the press and the formation of a specific Muslim public sphere in the early 20th century.²⁸ A prominent part of this new Muslim public sphere was the public questioning of and critical reflection on Islam, its essence, and its place in the modern world. Both religious scholars and secularly educated Muslim intellectuals were involved in this process. The press became the platform where not only current political and sociocultural issues were discussed, but also questions

25 For more on discussion on the cultural status of Bosnian Muslims during the late Ottoman period see: Edin Hajdarpašić, *Whose Bosnia? Nationalism and Political Imagination in the Balkans, 1840–1914* (Ithaca, New York; London: Cornell University Press, 2015); Amzi-Erdoğdular, “Afterlife of Empire.”

26 Sanjin Kodrić, “Traumatični susret s Evropom: ‘Austroougarska tema’ i počeci novije bošnjačke književnosti,” *Slavia Meridionalis* 12 (2012): 57–58; Greble, *Muslims and the Making of Modern Europe*, 23–52.

27 Enes Karić, “Aspects of Islamic Discourse in Bosnia-Herzegovina from Mid 19th till the End of the 20th Century: A Historical Review,” in *Şehrayin. Die Welt der Osmanen, die Osmanen in der Welt; Wahrnehmungen, Begegnungen und Abgrenzungen. Illuminating the Ottoman World. Perceptions, Encounters and Boundaries*, ed. Yavuz Köse (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012), 286.

28 For discussions about the development of public sphere in Muslim world in general see: Nadir Özbek, “Defining the Public Sphere during the Late Ottoman Empire: War, Mass Mobilization and the Young Turk Regime (1908–18),” *Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 5 (2007): 795–809; Bedross Der Matossian, “Formation of Public Sphere(s) in the Aftermath of the 1908 Revolution among Armenians, Arabs and Jews,” in “*L’ivresse de la liberté*: La révolution de 1908 dans l’Empire ottoman,” ed. François Geogon (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 189–220; Miriam Hoexter, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, and Nehemia Levtzion, eds., *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*. (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002).

regarding the interpretation of Islamic religious and legal heritage, interpretive authority, and the relationship between Islam towards European modernity.

A part of these discussions was an intense debate about the status of Muslim women in the family and society. Among the most important factors in bringing this issue to public attention was the founding of the Muslim reformist journal *Behar* that appeared in 1900. Secular educated scholars such as Edhem Mulabdić (1862–1954) and Osman Nuri Hadžić (1869–1937), Safvet-beg Bašagić (1870–1934), and the religious scholar Džemaludin Čaušević (1870–1930) were of particular importance for the development of this journal.²⁹ Muslim intellectuals, who published in *Behar* actively advocated the reform of traditional customs and institutions related to women, thereby arguing for the compatibility of these reforms with Islam.³⁰ The journal published articles on the education of Muslim women, marriage, upbringing, and short news on the emancipation of women in other Muslim communities.³¹

The Bosnian Muslim reformists formed part of a global intellectual landscape marked by the spread of the thesis that asserted that the civilizational status of a society is directly related to the status of women in that society.³² This thesis, developed by European Enlightenment thinkers, transcended its historical origins and gained prominence worldwide by the late 19th century. Over time, it has evolved into a powerful trend with far-reaching implications. Apart from serving Orientalist narratives asserting Western superiority, it played an important role in shaping discussions within the Muslim world about tradition, modernity, progress, and civilization.³³

There were two significant factors that contributed to the growth of interest in the Muslim woman question in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the early 20th century, both of which facilitated the spread of the woman-civilization thesis, which asserts that the status of women in social life serves as an indicator of a society's position on the ladder of civilization.

29 Bougarel, "Farewell to the Ottoman Legacy," 4–5.

30 Karčić, *Društveno-pravni aspekt islamskog reformizma*, 199.

31 K. Nihad, "Ženski mekteb u gradu Baku," *Behar* 3, no. 15 (1902): 240; Hasan Hodžić, "Nekoliko riječi roditeljima. O narodnom uzgoju," pt. 1, *Behar* 3, no. 8 (1902): 120–122; pt. 2, *Behar* 3, no. 9 (1902): 133–135; pt. 3, *Behar* 3, no. 10 (1902): 150–151; Osman Nuri Hadžić, "Turska žena (La femme Turque)," *Behar* 3, no. 12 (1902): 180–181; H. A. B, "Islamske dobrotvorke u Sarajevu," *Behar* 6, no. 7 (1905): 110; Muhamed Hilmi Hodžić, "Naobrazba muslimanskih žena (savjeti muslimanskim ženama)," pt. 1, *Behar* 1, no. 22/23 (1910): 344–350; pt. 2, *Behar* 1, no. 24 (1910): 373–377; "Feminizam u Turskoj," *Behar* 9, no. 9 (1908): 146; Musa Čazim Čatić, "Znaci da se budi islamsko ženskinje," *Behar* 8, no. 5 (1907): 69–71.

32 Ann Towns, "The Status of Women as Standard of Civilization," *European Journal of International Relations* 15, no. 4 (2009): 681–706; Ann E. Towns, "Carrying the Load of Civilisation: The Status of Women and Challenged Hierarchies," *Millennium*, 42, no.3 (2014): 595–613.

33 Ann Towns, "Civilization," in *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, eds. Lisa Disch and Mary Hawkesworth (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 79–99.

First, the increasing influence of Islamic reformist ideas throughout the Muslim world— of which Bosnia was effectively part and with which Bosnians interacted actively—brought this topic to the forefront of Bosnian Muslim discussions concerning the future of Islam and Muslims in the modern world.

Second, Muslim women were an important component of the Austro-Hungarian modernization projects. The Austro-Hungarian civilizational discourse considered the Muslim woman of key importance for the socio-cultural modernization of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The typical Orientalist tropes of backwardness of Muslims, especially Muslim women, were an integral part of this discourse.³⁴ The Austro-Hungarian efforts in modernizing female education in Bosnia and Herzegovina contributed to the intensification of public debates on the Muslim woman question and the inclusion of a variety of actors with varying perspectives into these debates.

During the first decade of the 20th century, discussions on the status of Muslim women in family and society were primarily dominated by reformist voices. However, the attempt by Habsburg authorities in 1911 to mandate compulsory primary education for all children, regardless of gender, prompted conservative circles to publicly express their opinions. In 1911, the Sarajevo-based association of Muslim school teachers (*Muallim*) published the pamphlet *Pisma u obranu muslimanskog ženskinja* (Letter in Defense of Muslim Women).³⁵ This pamphlet cautioned against the education of Muslim women as a path leading to secularism and immorality, highlighting the need to preserve traditional values and institutions. It was presented by *Muallim* as a reflection of their concerns regarding the effects of modern education on the moral order and identity of Bosnian Muslims.³⁶ However, while the criticism was prompted by Austro-Hungarian education reforms, it was directed not directly against the Austro-Hungarian authorities, but against those members of the Muslim community who advocated modern education for Muslim women.

Both the pamphlet's content and the author's background sparked political controversy among the Muslim community. The pamphlet published under the Muslim pen-name Safijja-hanum was actually written by Sofija Pletikosić, a Serb Orthodox woman who had previously published in the Bosnian-Serbian magazine *Bosanska vila* (Bosnian Fairy) articles on social effects of modern education and fashion trends.³⁷ Advocates of modern education

34 Giomi, *Making Muslim Women European*; Fabio Giomi, "Forging Habsburg Muslim Girls," *History of Education* 44, no. 3 (2015): 274–292.; Fabio Giomi, "Daughters of Two Empires: Muslim Women and Public Writing in Habsburg Bosnia and Herzegovina (1878–1918)," *Aspasia* 9, no. 1 (2015): 1; Robin Okey, *Taming Balkan Nationalism: The Habsburg "Civilizing Mission" in Bosnia, 1878–1914* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.)

35 Safijje-hanum [Sofija Pletikosić], *Pisma u obranu muslimanskog ženskinja* (Sarajevo: Izdanje uredništva Muallima u Sarajevu, 1911).

36 Giomi, "Forging Habsburg Muslim Girls," 285.

37 Giomi, *Making Muslim Women European*, 86–87; Zlatiborka Popov Momčinović, Fabio Giomi and Zlatan Delić, "Uvod – Period austrougarske uprave," *Zabilježene – žene i javni život Bosne i Hercegovine u 20. vijeku*, ed. Jasmina Čaušević (Sarajevo: Sarajevski otvoreni centar & Fondacija Cure, 2014), 23; 16–38

not only objected to the views presented in the brochure but also saw the fact that the author was a non-Muslim as evidence of a hidden agenda to keep Muslims uninformed.³⁸

In spite of critics' numerous allegations, there is no evidence that Sofija Pletikosić participated in any secret plot to keep Muslims ignorant. The views presented in this pamphlet were a clear continuation of her previous journalist efforts in which she expressed open disapproval of the adoption of European educational and fashion trends among Bosnian Christian Serb women. Although her views could be a critique of Westernization, it would be difficult to define them as anti-Muslim, since her criticisms were directed against the influence of modern European trends on Bosnian Christian Serbs as well as Muslims.

It seems plausible that the *Muallim* may have recruited Sofia Pletikosić for her previous journalistic contributions, as Fabio Giomi suggests, partly because conservative Muslims had limited experience with public speaking.³⁹ Through her involvement, conservative voices were able to engage more effectively in public discourse, aided by a text that was written by a woman who was experienced in public expression.

The discussions on the education of Muslim girls that continued throughout the first half of the 20th century and that I analyse at length in this research will provide insight into the complex perspectives of Bosnian Muslim intellectuals both towards their heritage and towards modern Europe. Islamic textual sources, legal and exegetical tradition, Islamic history, as well as modern ideas of scientific motherhood and domesticity were closely interwoven in various formulations of a desirable female education.

1.2.2. The Veiling Controversy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1918–1950

After World War I, there was the rapid growth of a Bosnian Muslim public sphere, which was characterized by the involvement of various Muslim intellectual trends in public discussions about Muslim women. In this period the issue of Muslim (un)veiling became the core issue of various debates about Islamic tradition, the nature of (Bosnian) Muslim identity, and the correct Islamic path to progress. The intensification of these discussions, in particular those about Muslim women, was closely linked with the demise of the Ottoman Empire and the formation of the new Yugoslav state.

In 1918, after the defeat of the Habsburg Empire in World War I, several nations in the Balkans, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, were united in the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, renamed in 1929 to Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The incorporation of Bosnia-Herzegovina within the Kingdom together with Serbs, Croats and Slovenes made

38 One of the strongest responses to the pamphlet came from Bosnian politician Hamdija Karamehmedović who saw it as primarily a Christian effort to impede the progress of Muslims in Bosnia. See: Hamdija Karamehmedović, *Odgovor na pismo "Safije" hanume* (Sarajevo: Naklada Zemana, Štamparija Bos. Pošte, 1911).

39 Giomi, *Making Muslim Women European*, 86–88.

it necessary for Bosnian Muslims to rethink their identity and tradition, and to define their place in the new state. Considering that women often serve as symbols of group identity and cultural distinctiveness in the age of nations, and that cultural difference is “frequently signalled through the dress and deportment of women,”⁴⁰ it is not surprising that issues related to Muslim women — especially those concerning Muslim women veiling — were employed by Bosnian Muslims as a framework through which they established their position in relation to others within the Yugoslav community.

The demise of the Ottoman Empire in the 1920s and the subsequent Kemalist reforms had also a profound impact on themes discussed in interwar Bosnian Muslim public sphere. These reforms, spanning various domains such as law, culture, social relations, and religion, intensified dialogues as well as discords among the Bosnian Muslim community regarding the reforms of traditional institutions and practices, the nature of a “true” Islam, and the relation between Islam and European modernity. One particular issue that came under scrutiny of Bosnian Muslims was the changing traditional attire of the Turkish woman.⁴¹ This issue served as a lens through which diverse perspectives on Bosnian Ottoman heritage, as well as the political, social, and intellectual developments in Turkey were articulated.

It should be noted that the Soviet anti-veiling campaigns initiated in the 1920s also had an impact on Bosnian Muslim public discourses.⁴² These campaigns were used by Bosnian conservatives during the interwar period not only to criticize communism as a direct threat to Islamic cultural traditions and religious values, but also to assert that these Soviet campaigns were deeply entrenched in the Kemalist reforms.⁴³ Moreover, after the end of World War II, with the establishment of a communist regime in Yugoslavia, these Soviet campaigns served as a model for Yugoslav communists to implement their own anti-veiling measures, ultimately resulting in the ban of the face veil in 1950.⁴⁴

In this context, the Muslim woman’s face veil was one of the most important issues used by Bosnian Muslim authors to express their views on what it meant to be authentically Muslim. To answer this question Bosnian Muslims not only invoked Islamic traditions and sources, but also critically reflected upon the developments in the Muslim world, modern secular ideologies, as well as upon their relationship with non-Muslims and their place, first in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and later under the communist regime after World War II.

40 Deniz Kandiyoti, “Identity and Its Discontents: Women and the Nation,” *Millennium* 20, no. 3 (1991): 435.

41 For a comprehensive analysis of the anti-veiling campaigns as a site where Kemalist reforms were negotiated, challenged, and resisted by various societal actors, refer to the following book: Sevgi Adak, *Anti-Veiling Campaigns in Turkey: State, Society and Gender in the Early Republic* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022).

42 For more about these campaigns see: Douglas T. Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 69–101, Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006).

43 Jahjzade, “Kemalističke vjerske reforme,” *Hikmet* 4, no. 46 (1933): 312–314.

44 Ivan Simic, *Soviet Influences on Postwar Yugoslav Gender Policies* (Cham.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 157–160.

Two pivotal moments in the evolution of Bosnian Muslim discussions about veiling were the publication of Dževad-beg Sulejmanpašić's book entitled *Muslimansko žensko pitanje: Jedan prilog njegovom rješenju* (The Muslim Woman Question: A Contribution to its Resolution) in 1918 and the lecture delivered by the highest-ranking Islamic dignitary in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Reis-ul-ulema, Mehmed Džemaludin Čaušević in 1927 in Sarajevo. These two positions will be elaborated in chapter 6, but a quick overview will be provided here to continue the historical background.

Sulejmanpašić's book adopted an Islamic reformist perspective, positing that the veil is a cultural tradition rather than a religious obligation. Simultaneously, he argued that the veil posed an obstacle to the integration of Muslims into the wider Yugoslav community. In his 1927 lecture, on the other hand, Džemaludin Čaušević argued that not wearing the face veil by Muslim women was in accordance with Islamic values and norms. He also made a favourable reference to the social reforms in Turkey, specifically the discouragement of the face veil, even though these reforms had a distinct secular and even anti-Islamic character. The fact that Čaušević was a theologian who held a high position in the '*ulamā*' class and that his argument touched on the issue of reinterpretation of Islamic teachings and practices must have played an important role in the fact that it led to profound divisions within the '*ulamā*' class.

The heated public debates between Muslim opponents and advocates of face veiling which will be later analysed in this study indicate the complexity of issues that surrounded these debates. We will see how conservative periodicals of the time accused advocates of unveiling of being apostates from the Islamic faith and of promoting the ideas of Kemalism and Bolshevism.⁴⁵ On the other hand, reformist circles considered the face veil a sign of abandoning Islam and a consequence of religious scholars' ignorance of both their own religion and the socio-political and cultural needs of Muslims. According to some reformists, the face veil was merely a remnant of tribal customs within Islam rather than a true religious obligation. In addition, some viewed it as an obstacle to the economic advancement of Muslims, while others considered it to be a cause of immorality. Besides, during the inter-war period Muslim intellectuals who promoted the national identification of Muslims, whether as Croatian, Serbian or Yugoslavian, saw the veil as a barrier to the development of national sentiments among Muslims and as a cultural and social barrier between Muslims and non-Muslims in Yugoslavia. By contrast, conservative and revivalist circles emphasized veiling as a strategy for maintaining clear distinctions between Muslims and others within Yugoslavia. It may be argued that this strategy was influenced by a deep concern about assimilation and the consequent threat of losing the Muslim identity.

45 Jahjajade, "Kemalističke vjerske reforme," 312–314.

The issue of the Islamic face veil gained significant attention following 1945, with the establishment of the communist Yugoslavia. Within the confines of communist ideology, the state launched campaigns that aimed to eliminate traditional attire worn by Bosnian Muslim women, like the *zar* or *feredža*, a long garment covering their body and their hair, and a face veil called *peča* or *jašmak*. While measures against different forms of Islamic head covering were not endorsed, the face veil was abolished by law in 1950, and the religious justifications for this ban were presented in a number of articles published throughout 1950 in the official herald of the Islamic religious community, *Glasnik Islamske vjerske zajednice* (Herald of the Islamic Religious Community). Throughout that year, the majority of the magazine's issues discussed that law and analysed the veiling of Muslim women from the cultural and religious point of view.

1.3. State of Research and Research Objective

Serious interest in the woman question in modern Islamic thought in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Muslim women's history in post-Ottoman Bosnia emerged only with the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Previously, research was largely confined to academic circles within Yugoslavia and mainly focused on the participation of women in the national liberation movement and in communist organizations. Books published during 1960s and 1970s were written within the ideological framework that presented the Communist Party as an exclusive emancipatory force.⁴⁶ The dominant ideology considered and publicly decried religion as backward. It deemed religion and progress as opposing concepts, and interpreted patriarchal family structures, particularly among Muslims, primarily as a result of the religious traditions or more specifically as a result of the Ottoman legacy. It did not provide fertile ground either for more serious studies of Muslim intellectual history or for the research of women's history before World War II.⁴⁷

Celia Hawkesworth, in her study of female public writing in Serbia and Bosnia correctly observes that the women's involvement in cultural life in the region "was virtually forgotten in the aftermath of the Second World War as a result of the distorting effects of communist ideology."⁴⁸ An exception in this respect is anthropologist and psychologist Vera Stein Erlich's

46 Mila Beoković, *Žene heroji* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1967); Rasim Hurem and Jasmina Musabegović, *Žene Bosne i Hercegovine u narodnooslobodilačkoj borbi 1941–1945. godine* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1977); Jovanka Kecman, *Žene Jugoslavije u radničkom pokretu i ženskim organizacijama 1918–1941* (Beograd: Narodna knjiga i Institut za savremenu istoriju 1978).

47 Chiara Bonfiglioli, "Biografije aktivistkinja AFŽ-a: Interseksionalna analiza ženskog djelovanja," in *Izgubljena revolucija: AFŽ između mita i zaborava*, eds. Andreja Dugandžić and Tijana Okić (Sarajevo: Udruženje za kulturu i umjetnost CRVENA, 2016), 23.

48 Celia Hawkesworth, *Voices in the Shadows: Women and Verbal Art in Serbia and Bosnia* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2000), 123.

Family in Transition. A Study of 300 Yugoslav Villages. It was field research conducted in the late 1930s on family customs and norms among different regions and religious groups in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, but the study was published only much later, in 1964.⁴⁹ Erlich's study provides an excellent insight into the lives of women, including Muslim women, in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia of the 1930s. While Erlich considered the Ottoman legacy in the region to have had a conservative effect on family relations in the region, Chiara Bonfiglioli underlines that Erlich's "distinction between 'old style' and 'modern' areas was in no way hierarchical or judgmental, and, interestingly, carried neither an Orientalist evaluation of the Ottoman presence in the region nor any affirmation of Western cultural superiority."⁵⁰

After the breakup of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, there was a surge of both local and foreign scholarly attention towards Bosnian Muslims and Islam in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Noteworthy contributions to this area were made by the Bosnian scholars Fikret Karčić and Enes Karić, who played significant roles in the development of the intellectual history of Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁵¹ Their works on Muslim reformism in Bosnia and Herzegovina were the first serious attempts to situate Bosnian reformism within the global context and the first works to recognize the woman question as an important part of the modern intra-Muslim debates on social, cultural, and religious issues. Although they only partially addressed the Muslim woman question within Islamic thought in Bosnia and Herzegovina, their positioning of Islamic reformism in Bosnia and Herzegovina within a global context has opened up the possibility of re-examining discussions pertaining to Muslim women on a broader scale.

Since the mid-2010s, international academic circles have taken an increased interest in the intellectual, cultural, and social history of the Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly during the late Ottoman and Habsburg periods. The historical works of Hannes Grandits and Edin Hajdarpašić on the late Ottoman period, and Leyla Amzi-Erdoğdular and Harun Buljina⁵² on the intellectual development of Muslims during the Habsburg period are noteworthy contributions to a growing field of research. These works provide original insights into intellectual and religious development of Bosnian Muslims, and question

49 Chiara Bonfiglioli, " 'An Age Fated to Vanish' ": Vera Stein Erlich's Anthropological Records of Interwar Yugoslavia Contribution to the Web-Feature 'European History – Gender History,' " *Themenportal Europäische Geschichte*, accessed November 2, 2022, <https://www.europa.clio-online.de/essay/id/fdae-1676>

50 Bonfiglioli, " 'An Age Fated to Vanish.' "

51 Fikret Karčić, *Društveno-pravni aspekt islamskog reformizma*; Fikret Karčić, *The Bosniaks and Challenges of Modernity: Late Ottoman and Hapsburg Times* (Sarajevo: El-Kalem, 1999); Enes Karić, "Islamski reformistički pokreti kod Bošnjaka: Pregled bosanskih muslimanskih rasprava za i protiv obnove i reforme u XX stoljeću," in *Islam u Bosni i Hercegovini i Njemačkoj*, eds. Enes Karić, Helmut Wiesmann, and Hansjörg Schmid (Sarajevo: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2008), 9–76.

52 Hannes Grandits, *The End of Ottoman Rule in Bosnia Conflicting Agencies and Imperial Appropriations* (London: Routledge, 2022); Hajdarpašić, *Whose Bosnia?*; Amzi-Erdoğdular, "Afterlife of Empire;" Leyla Amzi-Erdoğdular, "Alternative Muslim Modernities: Bosnian Intellectuals in the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 59, no. 4 (2017): 912–943; Harun Buljina, "Empire, Nation, and the Islamic World: Bosnian Muslim Reformists between the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires, 1901–1914" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2019).

previously accepted theses about a complete and rapid break between the Ottoman and Habsburg periods of Bosnian Muslim history. In her book *Muslims and the Making of Modern Europe*, Emily Greble details the complex relations and negotiations between Muslims and state authorities.⁵³ Greble's book shows how Muslim actively participated in the development of political, ethical and legal structures of their states.⁵⁴

Fabio Giomi and Adnan Jahić made also recent valuable contributions to modern Muslim intellectual history and Muslim women's history in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Giomi's book on women's associations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and his articles on the beginnings of the education of Muslim women in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the context of various modernization projects in post-Ottoman Bosnia shed light on neglected question of Muslim women's activism in modern Bosnian history and confirmed the centrality of the women's issues in various modernization projects.⁵⁵ His work is focused primarily on various forms of active participation of Muslim women in Bosnia and Herzegovina in social, educational and cultural projects between 1878 and 1941. Giomi's studies of Muslim women's volunteer associations and women's contributions to education and cultural development in the first decades of the post-Ottoman era, which are framed in the context of contemporary theoretical debates in social and cultural history, show that Muslim women were not completely excluded from public life in the mentioned period, as Yugoslav historiography after 1945 suggested.

Regarding the woman question in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the early 20th century, the most comprehensive study is Adnan Jahić's book *Muslimansko žensko pitanje u Bosni i Hercegovini* (The Muslim Woman Question in Bosnia and Herzegovina), which is based on the rich archival material of various Muslim local organizations and printed publications of that time. It provides valuable insights into the different initiatives and actions undertaken by Muslim individuals and organizations to redefine Muslim women's position in society.⁵⁶ Although Jahić's work also sheds light on the intellectual debates about the woman question between 1908 and 1950, there are some fundamental differences with the study I am undertaking. These differences relate to historiographical contexts, use of sources, and theoretical framework. Jahić's exploration of the discussions about the woman question

53 Greble, *Muslims and the Making of Modern Europe*.

54 Notwithstanding its interesting insights, this book has received some critical reviews, mostly about its methodological approach, see: Maurits Berger, "Review of *Muslims and the Making of Modern Europe* by Emily Greble," *Austrian History Yearbook* 54, (2023): 246–247; Dženita Karić, Harun Buljina, and Piro Rexhepi, " 'Feel-Good Orientalism and the Question of Dignity' | A Review Essay on Emily Greble's *Muslims and the Making of Modern Europe*," *The Maydan*, February 2, 2023, accessed November 11, 2023, <https://themaydan.com/2023/02/feel-good-orientalism-and-the-question-of-dignity/>.

55 Giomi, *Making Muslim Women European*; Giomi, "Forging Habsburg Muslim Girls," 274–292.; Giomi, "Daughters of Two Empires," 1.

56 Adnan Jahić, *Muslimansko žensko pitanje u Bosni i Hercegovini: žena u intelektualnom i društvenom životu Bošnjaka od aneksije do Zakona o zabrani nošenja zara i feredže (1908–1950)* (Zagreb, Sarajevo: Bošnjačka nacionalna zajednica za Grad Zagreb i Zagrebačku županiju; Naučnoistraživački institut "Ibn Sina," 2017).

is firmly rooted in the local historical context. His book examines the various perspectives of Muslim writers on issues related to women, placing them within the political and socio-religious context of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and primarily presenting these perspectives as responses to national developments. Jahić's focus on the national context of the debates obscures the ways in which different Muslim currents drew from the broader, both Muslim and European, reservoir of ideas to articulate and reinforce their own positions. In my study, on the other hand, my frame of reference is that of global intellectual history, as will be explained below. By situating the writings Bosnian Muslim debates on the woman question within a broader, global intellectual context. I aim to provide more nuanced understanding of these debates that extends beyond specific regional dynamics. This approach allows us to see how Bosnian Muslim debates contributed to and were shaped by global debates on the Muslim woman question.

When it comes to the sources used to provide insight into intellectual debates on the woman question, Jahić extensively relied on unpublished documents of Bosnian Muslim organizations, as well as the political press of Bosnian Muslims. His focus was particularly on political journals. Among these were *Bošnjak* (Bosniak) which was published from 1891 to 1910, and *Musavat* (Equality), the official herald of the *Muslim National Organization*—the first Muslim political party—published between 1906 and 1911. He devoted attention to two distinct publications titled *Muslimanska svijest* (Muslim Awareness): the first, the official herald of the *Muslim Progressive Party*, was published from 1908 to 1910, while the second, a political magazine, was published between 1936 and 1941. He also analysed publications associated with the *United Muslim Organization*, such as *Zeman* (Time) published from 1911 to 1914, and *Novi Vakaf* (New Era) published in 1913. Also, he focused on *Vrijeme* (Time), the herald of the *Muslim Organization*, published in 1919, and *Pravda* (Justice), the herald of the *Yugoslav Muslim Organization*, published from 1919 to 1925, as well as from 1926 to 1941. The focus of Jahić's analysis was also on the daily newspapers *Večernja pošta* (Evening Post), which was published in Sarajevo from 1921 to 1933; *Jugoslavenski list*, which was published also in Sarajevo from 1918 to 1941, and *Politika*, published in Belgrade since 1904.

My sources, on the other hand, mostly cover the cultural and intellectual publications rather than the sources of political organizations. My research relies primarily on textual sources, articles, books, magazines, and brochures through which various images were constructed during the first half of the 20th century of what was considered a “true Muslim woman,” but also of what was “authentic” Islam.

Jahić's book makes use of rich archival material to reveal a significant amount of information about the views of local Muslim organizations, scholars and intellectuals regarding the Muslim woman question, but it often remains descriptive, lacking a rigorous analysis and

a clear theoretical framework. Various socio-cultural initiatives and Muslim discourses on women are described mostly in relation to local political and socio-religious circumstances, but without a broader critical analysis of the role of the Muslim woman question in the self-definition of different Muslim groups, their understanding of Islamic tradition, Bosnian Muslim identity, and the formation of their relationships vis-a-vis the policies of the ruling governments over Bosnia and the trends of the global community of Muslims.

In contrast to the works of Jahić and Giomi, who do not explore the connection between the Muslim woman question and debates on authentic Islam, I argue that public debates on women among Bosnian Muslims were closely tied to the global process of redefining authentic Islamic religious and cultural traditions that took place within a specific context marked by the imperial and cultural domination of the Western modernity. I hold that the significant place that this question occupied in public confrontations among Muslim intellectuals over Islamic tradition and modernity clearly reveals that—to borrow Lata Mani’s words—tradition was not “the ground on which the status of woman being contested. Rather, the reverse was true: women in fact became the site on which tradition was debated and reformulated.”⁵⁷

Based primarily on the analysis of Muslim Bosnian periodicals and other printed publications from the first half of the twentieth century, I focus on the ways in which Islamic tradition was redefined in public discourses by means of the Muslim women question. In doing so, I look at the ways fundamental Islamic concepts were employed and redefined within these discussions and at the strategies used to claim the right to define authentic Islamic teachings on women. Further, since I consider Bosnian Muslim debates as part of broader, global discussions on the Muslim women’s question and the Islamic tradition that have emerged since the late 19th century among both Muslims and non-Muslims, I pay special attention to the global context in which they took place. Consequently, this research is theoretically and methodologically positioned primarily within the framework of global intellectual history, with a focus on intellectual connections, transfer and transformation of ideas, and their cultural appropriations within imperial and multi-national contexts.

Fabio Giomi and Adnan Jahić took as starting points for their research decisive moments in Bosnia and Herzegovina’s political, social, and cultural history, that is to say, the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1878 by the Habsburgs, and its subsequent annexation in 1908. As my study focuses on intra-Muslim debates in the public sphere, I chose as the starting point of my research a pivotal moment in the creation of a specifically Muslim modern public sphere, namely the emergence of the reformist magazine *Behar* (Blossom) in 1900. I consider the emergence of *Behar* as the beginning of a public discourses on topics that until then were considered to be in the exclusive domain of religious scholars. With

57 Lata Mani, “Contentious Traditions: The Debate of Sati in Colonial India,” *Cultural Critique*, no. 7 (1987): 153.

the emergence of *Behar*, public discussions on the cultural status of Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Islamic intellectual and religious heritage, and the status of Islam in the modern world began, with the participation of both religious scholars and secularly educated Muslims. Discussions on the religious status of established practices related to Muslim women in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the “true” teachings of Islam on women dominated the public life of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the first half of the twentieth century. The 1950 legal ban of the Muslim face veil marks the end of the period of this study. The new communist regime established after World War II and marginalization of religion by means of expropriation, arrests, and public campaigns, as well as passing the laws banning the *shari‘a* courts and Muslim women dress significantly contributed to the privatization of religion and interrupted long-standing public debates on the interpretation of Islam and the woman question.

1.4. Conceptual Framework: Locating the Bosnian Muslim Woman Question in Global Muslim Intellectual History of the Early 20th Century

The study of public Muslim debates on the woman question cannot be separated from the insights of gender studies and intellectual history that affirm the close relationship between discourses on women and broader socio-cultural and religious concerns. The use of women in discourses is often “a means of representing ideas about social order and social organization,”⁵⁸ and a type of code for other concerns and conceptualizations of difference.⁵⁹ Duderija suggests that representations of Muslim women have been at the centre of debates over “cultural identity, relationships between Muslim societies and the West, tradition and authenticity, and cultural specificity and globalism.”⁶⁰ Karen Offen and Ayako Kano have drawn attention to the importance of studying public debates on the woman question and gender issues as a means of interpreting different understandings of a situation in the past, different understandings of one’s own tradition, modernity and cultural norms and values.⁶¹

This study is informed by research that recognizes the intra-Muslim discussions on women’s issues as the major constituent of various interpretations of tradition and modernity among

58 Joan Wallach Scott, “‘L’ouvrière! Mot impie, sordide . . .’ Women Workers in the Discourse of French Political Economy, 1840–1860,” in *Gender and the Politics of History*, ed. Joan Wallach Scott (New York : Columbia University Press, 1999), 162.

59 Elizabeth A. Clark, “Engendering the Study of Religion,” in *The Future of the Study of Religion. Proceedings of Congress 2000*, eds. Slavica Jakelić and Lori Pearson (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2004), 217–242.

60 Adis Duderija and Halim Rane, *Islam and Muslims in the West: Major Issues and Debates* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 66.

61 Karen M Offen, *The Woman Question in France, 1400–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 1; Ayako Kano, *Japanese Feminist Debates: A Century of Contention on Sex, Love, and Labor* (Honolulu: University Of Hawaii Press, 2016), 4–5.

Muslim intellectuals since the 19th century. Afsaneh Najmabadi, Ellen Fleischmann, Monica Ringer, Asiya Alam, and others have arguably shown that the status of the Muslim woman was used to express deeper anxieties concerning the authentic Islamic tradition which were brought about by modernization or global Western influence.⁶² It is clear from these studies that one of the central notions through which Muslim intellectuals from the 19th century formed their divergent understandings of cultural and religious authenticity and sacred authority was exactly the woman question.

I view Bosnian Muslim debates as part of a global contestations over Islamic tradition and modernity, that show how Muslim women occupied the minds of both Muslim and non-Muslim intellectuals from the late 19th century. The woman question was the central medium through which both Islamic tradition and modernity were debated, (re)constructed and (re)imagined.

Since both tradition and modernity are not only diversely defined within the social sciences and humanities, but also ideologically charged terms it is important to clarify here how I use these concepts. Unlike classical modernization theories—which reduce Islam to a static religious tradition and modernity to Western secular-liberal values—this study approaches both categories as historically constructed, discursively shaped, and constantly renegotiated within various contexts.⁶³ It focuses on how Bosnian Muslims conceptualized these terms in a specific intellectual and historical setting of the early 20th century. Their diverse and often conflicting understandings of tradition and modernity are treated as integral to both ongoing reinterpretations of Islamic tradition and global discourses on modernity.

This approach is influenced by Talal Asad's concept of Islam as a discursive tradition. Asad understands Islam not as a closed, static inherited set of norms and values, but as an open space continuously shaped and reshaped through ongoing interpretations, debates, and practices across various historical and cultural contexts.⁶⁴ This framework enables a critical analysis of Bosnian Muslims' discursive engagements with questions of religious authority, inherited scholarly traditions, and the possibilities for reinterpreting Islamic sources as part of the ongoing redefinition of Islamic tradition. In parallel, this dissertation draws on the central idea of the rich scholarship of plural modernities, which rejects the idea of Western modernity as a universal or normative model, and instead recognizes the existence of

62 Afsaneh Najmabadi, "Veiled Discourse—Unveiled Bodies," *Feminist Studies* 19, no. 3 (1993): 487–518; Ellen Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women: The Palestinian Women's Movement, 1920–1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Monica Ringer, "Rethinking Religion: Progress and Morality in the Early Twentieth Century Iranian Women's Press" *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 24, no. 1 (2004): 49–57; Asiya Alam, *Women, Islam and Familial Intimacy in Colonial South Asia* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2021).

63 For classical understanding of modernization see Daniel Lerner and David Riesman, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East* (New York: Free Press, 1964).

64 Talal Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, 1986), 14.

multiple, and locally grounded articulations of modernity, that are integral part of global historical processes.⁶⁵ Bosnian Muslim reflections on progress, civilization, reform, gender, and Europe are approached in this work as distinct local conceptualizations of what it meant to be modern.

Within this context, it is necessary to clarify that when referring to European modernity, I do not invoke a universal or normative model. Rather, I refer to a Western European, historically specific and discursively constructed model of modernity that since 19th century gained global prominence through processes of colonial expansion, epistemic authority, and institutional diffusion.⁶⁶ This model framed a particular set of ideals—such as secularism, individual autonomy, and rationality—as self-evident, universally applicable values intrinsically tied to the notion of modernity. In this perspective, the specific Western European worldview positioned itself as the only legitimate path to modern life and progress, excluding other societies from civilizational development.⁶⁷

Although I use the term European modernity frequently throughout this study, I do so with critical awareness of its limitations. My usage does not imply that modernity in Europe was internally homogenous or free of contradiction.⁶⁸ I employ the term heuristically to refer to a historically specific and discursively dominant articulation of modernity—one that functioned as a shared frame of reference across diverse global contexts, including South-eastern Europe. The repetition of this term in this study reflects both its historical centrality and the fact that many Bosnian Muslim intellectuals engaged with it explicitly—whether through critique, adaptation, or negotiation. Thus, I use this term as an analytical shorthand for a constellation of ideas and values that shaped the global discourses of modernity. Rather than exploring the origins or internal tensions of this European model, this dissertation focuses on Bosnian Muslim discourses on the woman question to explore how Bosnian Muslims positioned themselves within its dominant discourses.

This approach facilitates the exploration of the diverse and often competing conceptualizations of modernity and tradition articulated within Bosnian Muslim discourses

65 For scholarship advancing the concept of plural or multiple modernities from diverse intellectual perspectives, see Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, ed., *Multiple Modernities* (London: Routledge, 2017). Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, “On Alternative Modernities,” *Public Culture* 11, no. 1 (1999): 1–18; Dietrich Jung, *Islamic Modernities in World Society: The Rise, Spread, and Fragmentation of a Hegemonic Idea* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2023).

66 For critical accounts of how Western European modernity was constructed as a normative and civilizational ideal through colonial and epistemic domination see Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

67 For a critical approach to the presumed neutrality and universality of these ideals, particularly secularism see: Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003) and Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

68 For more on the complexity and internal diversity of European modernity, see Peter Wagner, *European Modernity: A Global Approach* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017).

about women. While some Bosnian Muslims framed modernity as inherently Islamic, others saw it as synonymous with the values and institutions of Western Europe; likewise, some viewed tradition as a dynamic field open to (re)interpretation, while others saw it as a fixed set of inherited norms. These divergent views cannot be reduced to simplistic acts of acceptance or rejection of the dominant European model of modernity and its narratives that have historically marginalized not only Muslim communities worldwide, but also Balkan societies more broadly, often positioning them as ambiguous, semi-European spaces between civilization and backwardness.⁶⁹ These Bosnian Muslim positions reflect complex, context-specific efforts to navigate between central Islamic concepts, global influences—both Islamic and European—and the pressures of local modernization processes. They show how Bosnian Muslims articulated locally grounded yet globally connected visions of tradition and modernity that drew from multiple sources.

A nuanced understanding of Bosnian Muslim debates on Muslim women requires an examination of the connections and entanglements between Bosnian Muslim Islamic thought, modern Islamic intellectual currents from around the world, modern European ideas and specific local discursive and socio-cultural context. By viewing the Bosnian debates through the lens of global history, which entails an acknowledgment of global interdependences, we can gain a deeper understanding of how they were shaped by a complex interplay of both local and global factors. Among these factors are the emergence of global networks of Muslim intellectuals, the ascendancy of Islamic reformism throughout the Muslim world, and the global circulation of European modernity ideas, as well as the specific local sociocultural and political conditions.

This study draws upon recent scholarship in Muslim intellectual history that utilizes historical approaches and paradigms such as entangled history, transnational history, global history, and *histoire croisée* that concentrate on the processes of exchange, interdependence and interaction in global context.⁷⁰ By contextualizing Islamic intellectual history within the globalization process emerging in the late 19th century, which was facilitated by rapid technological advances and global political shifts, this scholarship has demonstrated that ideas and concepts became increasingly intertwined across diverse geographical boundaries

69 For more on how Balkan was constructed as Europe's "Other within" see Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

70 For more about global intellectual history see: Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori, eds., *Global Intellectual History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013); Bruce Mazlish, "An Introduction to Global History," in *Conceptualizing Global History*, eds. Bruce Mazlish and Ralph Buultjens (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 1–24; Raymond Grew, "On the Prospect of Global History" in *Conceptualizing Global History*, eds. Bruce Mazlish and Ralph Buultjens (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 227–249; Margrit Pernau, "Whither Conceptual History? From National to Entangled Histories," *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 7, no. 1 (2012): 1–11; John-Paul A Ghobrial, "Introduction: Seeing the World like a Microhistorian," *Past & Present* 242, no. Supplement_14 (2019): 1–22; Zrinka Blažević i Tihana Kušter, "Historija isprepletanja danas: teorijska polazišta i istraživačke perspektive," *Radovi* 52, no. 1 (2020): 15–36; Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

during this period. The recent studies, using various methodological and theoretical vocabularies, have in their analysis of modern Islamic intellectual history succeeded to move away from Eurocentric approaches and opened wider perspectives for pluralistic interpretations. They shed light on the multifaceted relationship between modern Islamic and European intellectual currents, dynamic interplay between local and global trends and forces, tensions between cultural homogeneity and heterogeneity, and provide insight into the cross-cultural interactions in multiple directions. They also provide a glimpse into new ties and connections visible in the emergence of a new global sense of an interconnected Muslim world.⁷¹

While studies of Islam in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Bosnian Muslims traditionally have focused primarily on the issue of national identification of Muslims and their attitudes towards modern national ideologies, recent studies indicate increased interest in the development of Islamic intellectual history within a global context. The studies of Leyla Amzi-Erdogdular, Dennis Dierks, Harun Buljina, Enes Karić and Fikret Karčić have demonstrated complex connections, entanglements, translations and transfers of ideas and concepts which transcend familiar geographical boundaries. Dennies Dierks' research on Islamic intellectual history in Habsburg Bosnia indicates the development of a modern concept of Muslim globality or global Muslim connectivity among Bosnian Muslims in the first half of the 20th century.⁷² He has shown how Bosnian intellectuals in Habsburg Bosnia creatively adapted and merged ideas from different sources including Ottoman history, modern Islamic reformism and Western modernity to develop their narratives of reform.⁷³ Leyla Amzi-Erdogdular's research views Habsburg Bosnia as a continuation of, rather than a break from, Ottoman Bosnia.⁷⁴ Harun Buljina's dissertation on the early 20th century pan-Islamist movement in Bosnia-Herzegovina emphasizes networks of collaboration that tied modern reformist scholars to both the wider Muslim world and previous generations

71 Ammeke Kateman, *Muhammad 'Abduh and his Interlocutors: Conceptualizing Religion in a Globalizing World* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2019); Dietrich Jung, *Orientalists, Islamists and the Global Public Sphere: A Genealogy of the Modern Essentialist Image of Islam* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2011); Götz Nordbruch and Umar Ryad, *Transnational Islam in Interwar Europe: Muslim Activists and Thinkers* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Seema Alavi, *Muslim Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Empire* (London: Harvard University Press, 2015); Faiz Ahmed, *Afghanistan Rising: Islamic Law and Statecraft between the Ottoman and British Empires* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017). For more on the emergence of the new idea of the Islamic or Muslim world see: Cemil Aydin, "Globalizing the Intellectual History of the idea of 'Muslim World,'" in *Global Intellectual History*, eds. Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 159–186; Cemil Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017).

72 Dennis Dierks, "Mediatizing Violence and Renegotiating Commonality: Bosnian Muslim Press Reporting on the Italo-Turkish War (1911–1912)," *Diyâr* 2, no. 1 (2021): 105–133.

73 Dierks, "Scripting, Translating, and Narrating Reform," 157–222.

74 Amzi-Erdogdular, "Alternative Muslim Modernities," 912–943.

of Bosnian scholars.⁷⁵ Fikret Karčić's and Enes Karić's studies have acknowledged the influences of global Islamic reformism on Bosnian reformists.⁷⁶

By exploring how Bosnian Muslim intellectuals engaged in global Islamic debates during the early 20th century, I intend to deepen our understanding of the global dimensions of Bosnian Muslim intellectual thought. I do so by situating local debates on the Muslim woman question in the broader context of global debates on tradition and modernity, which allows us to observe the dynamic interplay between local perspectives and global Islamic intellectual currents. This provides insight into Bosnian Muslims' active participation in broader Muslim intellectual discourses.

1.5. Methodology: Global Intellectual Debates in Local Public Spheres in Times of Change

In order to examine the Bosnian Muslim public debates on the woman question, this study undertakes a contextual analysis of the debates in relation to the global discourses about this issue that date back to the late 19th century.

In the first place, it means that I position the Bosnian debates within a broader Muslim debate on authentic Islam and the related issues of authority and modernity that dominated Muslim world from late 19th century. I consider these global discourses about the true Islam and its place in modernity as the primary framework within which local Bosnian debates on the woman question unfolded. Recognizing that these global discourses were initiated and significantly shaped by the global reformist call for revitalization of true Islamic principles, I begin my work by outlining its main ideas and arguments. The global reformist ideas on Islamic tradition in modernity sparked a range of ideological responses across the Muslim world. An overview of the core reformist ideas will therefore be given to allow for a comprehensive understanding of the foundations that influenced the local Bosnian debates on the Muslim woman question.

Furthermore, in my analysis of the Bosnian debates about Muslim women I pay special attention to authors, journals, and central arguments from other parts of the Muslim world that Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina employed in their discursive constructions of the ideal Muslim woman. My intention is not to identify specific influences or to apply the traditional centre-periphery dichotomy to the analysis of Bosnian Islamic discourses,

75 Harun Buljina, "Empire, Nation, and the Islamic World."

76 Karčić, *The Bosniaks and Challenges of Modernity*; Karčić, *Društveno-pravni aspekt islamskog reformizma*, 197–241; Enes Karić, "Islamski reformistički pokreti kod Bošnjaka: Pregled bosanskih muslimanskih rasprava za i protiv obnove i reforme u XX stoljeću," 9–76; Enes Karić, "Islamic Thought in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the 20th Century: Debates on Revival and Reform," *Islamic Studies* 41, no. 3 (2002): 391–444.

but rather to provide an insight into wider intellectual and discursive framework for Bosnian debates. This focus serves two purposes. First, it aims to demonstrate how the increasing interconnectedness of the Muslim world shaped Bosnian Muslim debates on the woman question, as evidenced in the dynamic circulation of ideas and intellectual trends among distant Muslim regions. Second, it reveals the multiple references that were made in Bosnian Muslim debates to Islamic trends, concepts, and texts from different regions. I consider these references as instrumental in the fostering and promotion of the idea of Muslim commonality among Bosnian Muslims, as well as in legitimizing diverse interpretations of Islamic tradition and diverse narratives on the authentic Islamic teaching about women. Bosnian Muslim perspectives on the broader Islamic reformist movement in the Muslim world are given special attention in this study since, as already explained, their ideas provided the conceptual framework within which Bosnian intra-Muslim discussions on the woman question were positioned. Bosnian Muslims developed their own creative processes of approving, contesting, or criticizing the main ideas of Islamic reformism within a local political, social, and cultural context marked by profound changes in politics and culture. These creative processes provided new opportunities for Bosnian Muslims to articulate their own interpretations of Islamic principles and values, as well as to negotiate their identity in a changing environment.

While the different constructions of the Muslim woman were part of the larger Muslim quest for authenticity, the role of modern Europe cannot be underestimated as an important reference point in intra-Muslim debates on the woman question. We will see in the Bosnian case that the dominant Western discourses on women played a significant role in creating a close link between the Muslim woman question, civilizational progress, and the place of Islamic tradition in the modern world in Muslim intellectual thought. On the other hand, the diverse Bosnian Muslim constructions of the ideal Muslim woman cannot be considered as a mere rejection of Western modernity or an imitation of Western concepts. My understanding of the relationship between modern Islamic thought in Bosnia and Herzegovina and European intellectual currents relies on recent concepts of cultural transfer. Unlike conventional studies of cultural transfer that have focused on the diffusion of cultural concepts from one national context to another, recent approaches emphasize that the whole process is formative for the object of transfer and its meaning, and transformative for all parties involved.⁷⁷

77 Nikola Tomašegović, "Modernistički pokret mladih u hrvatskoj kulturi i politici na prijelomu 19. i 20. stoljeća" (PhD diss., University of Zagreb, 2022), 22. For more on cultural transfer studies see: Wolfgang Schmale, "Cultural Transfer," *European History Online* (EGO), 2012, accessed March 20, 2022, <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/schmalew-2012-en>; Stefanie Stockhorst, *Cultural Transfer through Translation: The Circulation of Enlightened Thought in Europe by Means of Translation* (Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 2010); Steen Bille Jørgensen and Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink, "Introduction: Reframing the Cultural Transfer Approach," in *Cultural Transfer Reconsidered: Transnational Perspectives, Translation Processes, Scandinavian and Postcolonial Challenges*, eds. Steen Bille Jørgensen and Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2021), 1–20.

My analysis of debates on the Muslim woman question in the Bosnian context demonstrates the creative ways in which fundamental Western concepts such as civilization, progress, and emancipation have been redefined within the Muslim discursive tradition to secure the place of Islam in the modern world and to define Muslim's place and identity, first in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and then later in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and communist Yugoslavia.

1.5.1. Analysis of Discourses

Significant for the Bosnian Muslim debates about women is the plurality of different models of the ideal Muslim woman and the related divergent understandings of Islamic tradition and modernity. In this study, I will approach this pluralism of modern Islamic thought through the lens of internal criticism. I consider the diverse discursive constructions of the "true Muslim woman" and "true Islam" as an expression of an open, on-going development and transformation of Islamic tradition. These debates on the Muslim woman question reflect efforts to find within the Islamic tradition answers to socio-political and cultural changes and to provide a place for the Islamic values and principles in the future. Drawing on the concept of the discursive tradition as outlined above, I treat these contestations not as deviations from tradition, but as integral to its ongoing redefinition.

The case of the Bosnian Muslim woman question in early 20th century shows how the general principles and teachings on women enshrined in the textual foundations of Islam have been constantly redefined in Islamic thought, and that Islamic thought itself is to a significant degree marked by multivocality.⁷⁸ To that extent, this study stands in opposition to cultural existentialism, i.e. the understanding that "cultures contain immutable and permanent characteristics which are discoverable."⁷⁹ Variant and competing narratives and concepts of the ideal Muslim woman built within the Islamic frame of reference plausibly demonstrate a clash of ideas and interpretations within modern Islam. They show that, as Peter Mandaville argues, the crucial contestations within Islam are linked to the issue of interpreting the ethical claims of Islam.⁸⁰

1.5.2. Sources

Taking into account contemporary research from various fields that emphasizes the importance of the modern press in fragmenting religious authority, fostering global connections and the dissemination of ideas, as well as shaping the public sphere, the main

78 Muhammad Khalid Masud, "The Scope of Pluralism in Islamic Moral Traditions," in *The Many and the One Religious and Secular Perspectives on Ethical Pluralism in the Modern World*, eds. Richard Madsen and Tracy B Strong (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003.), 180–191.

79 Katerina Dalacoura, *Islam, Liberalism and Human Rights: Implications for International Relations* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 5.

80 Peter G. Mandaville, *Transnational Muslim Politics: Reimagining the Umma* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001), 81.

source which I will use in the attempt to reconstruct the Bosnian Muslim debates are the periodicals, brochures and books printed in the first half of the twentieth century.⁸¹

I have particularly focused on the periodical press because the press was the main medium thorough which Muslim authors publicly confronted their often-contradictory views on women's issues. Since the illiteracy level in Bosnia and Herzegovina was very high during the period analysed here, is difficult to ascertain whether it had any impact on the broader population.⁸² It can be assumed that the periodical press primarily served as a medium for exchanging ideas primarily among the small echelon of the upper middle classes of society, and had little impact on the larger public. But within this relatively small group, these exchanges provided an opportunity for readers to get involved in discussions and comment on the socio-cultural situation of Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina; it made active dialogue possible and facilitated the confrontation of ideas among members of different intellectual currents present in Bosnia and Herzegovina, making the printed press the main platform on which modern intra-Muslim discussions took place. Articles published in one magazine were often commented upon, either in the same magazine or in a magazine of a different orientation, thus contributing to the development of polemical spirit in the Muslim community. Also, the journals from Bosnia and Herzegovina published news about developments in Muslim communities abroad and translated articles of Muslim authors outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and they so enable us to see how Bosnian Muslims positioned themselves in the Muslim world. I would argue that the expansion of the printed texts by means of the press and publications that took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the first half of the 20th century was of the tremendous importance for the development of debates about the interpretation, authenticity, and authority of Islam.

81 Juan R. I. Cole, "Printing and Urban Islam in the Mediterranean World, 1890–1920," in *Modernity and Culture. From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean*, eds. Leila Tarazi Fawaz, Christopher Alan Bayly, and Robert Ilbert (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 344–364; Anthony Gorman and Didier Monciaud, "Introduction," in *The Press in the Middle East and North Africa, 1850–1950: Politics, Social History and Culture*, eds. Anthony Gorman and Didier Monciaud (Edinburgh: University Press, 2018), 1–28; Göran Larsson, *Muslims and the New Media: Historical and Contemporary Debates* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011); James L. Gelvin and Nile Green "Introduction: Global Muslims in the Age of Steam and Print" in *Global Muslims in the Age of Steam and Print*, eds. James L. Gelvin and Nile Green (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019), 1–22.

82 In 1910, 87.8 percent of the Bosnian population was illiterate, including 94.6 percent of the Muslim population. See: Bougarel, *Islam and Nationhood in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 13, 42–43; Semir Hadžimusić, "Opismenjavanje stanovništva u sjeveroistočnoj Bosni u periodu obnove," *Arhivska praksa* 2, no. 21 (2018): 92. It is important to note that these figures reflect a narrow Habsburg definition of literacy, limited to proficiency in the Latin or Cyrillic scripts. The census did not account for the religious and functional literacy among Bosnian Muslims who used the Arabic script. Nevertheless, since the periodicals examined here were printed in Latin and Cyrillic script, their readership certainly remained confined to a small, formally educated segment of the population. See: Dževada Šuško, *Faith and Loyalty: Bosniaks and the Austro-Hungarian Empire* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought IIIT, 2024), 95.

For this study, I selected cultural and religious magazines published in the period between 1900 and 1950 that represent the main intellectual currents of the period.⁸³ It should be noted here that the number of reformist journals analysed in this study is much higher than the number of conservative or later revivalist journals. This large number of reformist publications reflects the situation that these periodicals were the main medium for the transmission of reformist ideas in the public sphere in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the first half of the 20th century, while conservative representatives of Islamic thought only later opted for this way of transmitting their ideas. In the 1920s, they progressively engaged in public debates. It is noteworthy that revivalist inclinations emerged in modern Bosnian Islamic intellectual thought only in the late 1930s.

Of the reformist-oriented journals I selected the following three for this study: *Behar* published from 1900 to 1911; *Novi Behar* (New Blossom) published from 1927 to 1945, and *Gajret* (Effort) published from 1907 to 1941. A distinctive trait of *Gajret* lies in its inclination towards the Serbian national affiliation of Muslims. In its articles, notably in the interwar period, there is a visible endeavour to promote the national education of Muslims. While *Gajret* clearly had a nationalist agenda, I regard it as an important journal for disseminating ideas of Islamic reformism due to its dedication to Islamic content. Analysis of its articles reveals that both Islamic and nationalist perspectives were used to discuss Muslim women. Nevertheless, I would argue that, although a nationalist element was present in its discourse, it did not overshadow the reformist aspect. I have selected *Hikmet* (Wisdom) published from 1929 to 1936 as an illustrative example of conservative-oriented journal and *El-Hidaje* (The Guidance) as a representative of revivalist perspectives. I also included in my analysis *Đulistan* (Rose Garden), as the first Muslim journal for women which was published only in 1926. The journal *Glasnik Islamske vjerske zajednice* (Herald of the Islamic Religious Community) which was published from 1933 to 1950 was chosen as an official herald of the Islamic authorities. A first issue of this journal was published in 1933 by the Supreme Council of the Islamic Religious Community of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. It was regularly published to 1945. After a short break of five years, it was republished in 1950. From 1933 to 1950 this periodical changed its name several times in accordance with political fluctuations as well as changes in the organization of Islamic affairs in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁸⁴

83 For more about Bosnian publications see: Muhsin Rizvić, *Behar-književnoistorijska monografija* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 2000); Azra Kantardžić, *Bibliografija Novog Behara* (Sarajevo: Gazi Husrev-begova biblioteka, 2007); Adnan Jahić, *Hikmet*; Ibrahim Kemura, *Uloga Gajreta u društvenom životu Muslimana* (Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1986); Đermana Šeta, *Prilozi za istraživanje sociokulturnog položaja žene u BiH* (Sarajevo: Centar za edukaciju i istraživanje "Nahla", 2011).

84 It was published under the following names: *Glasnik Vrhovnog starješinstva Islamske vjerske zajednice Kraljevine Jugoslavije* (Herald of the Supreme Council of the Islamic Religious Community of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia), *Glasnik Islamske vjerske zajednice Kraljevine Jugoslavije* (Herald of the Islamic Religious Community of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia), *Glasnik Islamske vjerske zajednice u NDH* (Herald of the Islamic Religious Community in the Independent State of Croatia) *Glasnik Vrhovnog islamskog starješinstva u Federativnoj Narodnoj Republici Jugoslaviji* (Herald of the Supreme Islamic Council in the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia).

In addition to periodicals, I analysed books, brochures and pamphlets that dealt with the Muslim woman question in this period. The journals and other printed sources were collected at the National Library in Zagreb and the Gazi Husrev Bey Library in Sarajevo. First, I consulted all issues of these periodicals to single out topics related to the woman question, and then I carried out the analysis of those articles that dealt with specific issues related to the woman question.

1.6. Chapter Outline

In the first part of this research, I discuss the main features of the global and local socio-cultural and intellectual milieu in which Bosnian Muslim debates on the woman question took place.

The chapter 2 (“Reformist Discourses: Foundations for Rethinking Islamic Tradition in Modernity”) is mostly based on secondary literature and presents the main characteristics of the modern, global Muslim search for authenticity initiated by the Muslim reformists. that inevitably raised the question of tradition, modernity, and authority to define Islamic orthodoxy. This chapter focuses primarily on the global reformist discourse on renewal of Islam as modern reformists’ redefinition of the classical Islamic concepts created a discursive framework which served not only as a reference point for Bosnian reformist, but also as a reference point for conservative and revivalist authors.

Chapter 3 (“Between the Global and Local: Islamic Discourse in Bosnia and Herzegovina”) concentrates on the complex local socio-intellectual context in Bosnia characterized by the profound changes in all areas of life and the presence of diverse and manifold ideologies in which the Muslim discourses about the Muslim women developed. It provides insights into the key factors that created a fertile ground for the pluralization of Islamic thought and the fragmentation of religious authority, and the chapter endeavours to shed light on this complex phenomenon. Special attention is given to the development of modern education, Muslim cultural organizations, and modern magazines, as these factors enabled the pluralization of Islamic thought and the development of polemical culture among Bosnian Muslims. Besides, it provides an overview of the main intellectual trends and topics present in modern Islamic thought in Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to place texts related to the status of Muslim women within the wider thematic and discursive context.

Chapters 4 (“Exploring the Multifaceted Roles of the Muslim Woman Question in Global Modernity”) examines the crucial significance and diverse roles of the Muslim woman’s question in narratives of progress, authenticity, identity and belonging, within European and Muslim contexts, encompassing both global Muslim and Bosnian discourses. It brings

to light the crucial role that this issue played in the various interpretations of Islam and modern Europe, the understanding of one's own civilizational status, and the definition of internal boundaries within the Muslim community.

In the final part of the thesis, chapters 5 (Muslim Woman's Education, Authenticity, and Progress: Bosnian Muslim Perspectives) and 6 (Debates on Face Veiling) contain a presentation of debates on, respectively, Muslim women education and (un)veiling as the most commonly discussed women issues in modern Islamic thought in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since this study approaches the woman question as part of a wider global process of (re)definition of Islamic tradition and modernity, topics are critically analysed and interpreted with the following questions in mind: How do women's issues relate to the self-critical evaluation of the status of the Muslim community in Bosnia and Herzegovina? What is the role of the woman question in debates about Muslim advancement in Bosnia and Herzegovina? How is the authority to speak about and represent Muslim women and Islam constructed and defended? What strategies did Bosnian Muslim authors employ to portray varying perspectives on the appropriate role of women in both family and society as inherently Islamic? Which texts are utilized, and how are the fundamental Islamic textual sources and core concepts comprehended and expounded upon to legitimize diverse understandings of woman status? How are the Islamic legal and theological traditions interpreted, and what impact does this have on the comprehension of Muslim women's status and position? To what extent do Bosnian Muslim authors reference authors and concepts from other regions of the Muslim world to validate their contentions concerning the ideal, Islamic womanhood? To what degree do Muslim authors from Bosnia and Herzegovina invoke non-Islamic European authors and ideas, and what justifications are employed for citing such non-Islamic sources? How did Muslim authors employ the topic of Muslim women to shape their stance on European modernity, the relationship between Islam and the West, and to develop distinct visions of Islamic modernity?

Through the lens of these critical questions, I aim to demonstrate the various ways in which the woman question played a crucial role in the debate about authenticity, authority, and modernity in Bosnia and Herzegovina.