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Leiden
The Netherlands

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

Šerić, M.

Citation

Šerić, M. (2025, September 24). *The Muslim woman question in Bosnia and Herzegovina: between Islamic tradition and global modernity*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4261977>

Version: Publisher's Version

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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

CHAPTER 6



6. Debates on Face Veiling

This chapter examines the lively public debates about Muslim women's face veiling that unfolded in the early 20th century among Bosnian Muslim intellectuals and religious scholars, who claimed the right to speak on behalf of Islam and Muslim women. It focuses on the diverse meanings attributed to the veil within the modern Muslim discourse in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It highlights the arguments of both proponents and opponents of the face veiling, revealing how the veil served as a kind of screen onto which the different understandings of Islam, identity and future of Bosnian Muslims were projected. My analysis of veiling debates in Bosnia draws on recent studies that have demonstrated how these discussions were deeply intertwined with broader socio-religious issues.

The significant interest that Bosnian Muslim authors had in this issue was, to my mind, linked to several factors.

First, clothing in general is a powerful communication system. It does not have only a protective function, but also a symbolic function of reinforcing and expressing group identity, social status, religious affiliation, marital status and sexual availability.⁶⁰¹ In Muslim communities "clothing has historically been intimately connected with notions of purity and impurity (ṭahāra and najas), ritual behavior (sunna), and the differentiation of the believer from the unbeliever (ghijār), as well as the separation of the genders (ḥijāb)."⁶⁰² Clothing is both "an indicator and a producer of gender."⁶⁰³ Burman and Turbin have noted that clothing is "one of the most consistently gendered aspects of material and visual culture."⁶⁰⁴ While the close association between dress and gender is a universal element of all cultures, what is held appropriate for each sex is culturally determined and temporal. The attitudes towards socially acceptable ways of dressing for women and men indicate the relationship towards dominant social norms and values. Clothing is used to express both, the acceptance and the resistance towards hegemonic norms and socio-cultural changes. As women in different societies throughout the history have had an important role in preserving and expressing group identity, honour, and morality it is not surprising that in the times of deep social, political and cultural changes during the first half of the 20th century Muslim woman and her veil became an integral part of intra-Muslim discussions on the future of Muslim community in Bosnia and Herzegovina, its identity, progress and

601 For more on symbolic function of clothing and dress see: Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins and Joanne B. Eicher, "Dress and identity" in *Dress and identity*, eds. Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins, Joanne B. Eicher and Kim K. P. Johnson (New York: Fairchild Publications, 1995), 7–18; Malcolm Barnard, *Fashion as communication* (New York: Fairchild Publications, 2002).

602 Yedida Kalfon Stillman and Norman A. Stillman, *Arab Dress: From the Dawn of Islam to Modern Times* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2003): 1.

603 Saadia Abid, "Religion as Faith? Education Purdah and Modernity. An Ethnographic Study of Islamabad's Madrassah Jamia Hafsa" (PhD diss., University of Vienna, 2010), 34.

604 Barbara Burman and Carole Turbin, "Introduction: Material Strategies Engendered," *Gender & History* 14, no. 3 (2002): 371.

morality. During that time, there were changes in traditionally accepted ways of dressing for Muslim women, primarily from urban areas. The traditional urban attire of Muslim women worn outside home consisted of *feredža* (*ferace*), which was later replaced by *zar* (*izār*).⁶⁰⁵

Till the second half of 19th century women mainly wore a type of wide coat with long wide sleeves and a large collar around the neck made of black or dark green thick woolen cloth, called the *feredža*. Together with the *feredža* three covers for the head and face were worn: a *jašmak* (*yašmak*), *čember* (*çember*) and *dušeme*.⁶⁰⁶ In the second half of the 19th century a more affordable cloak named the *zar* began also to be worn by Muslim women. The *zar* was a kind of a wide, uncut coat that, gathered at the waist, formed a skirt in the lower part, and the upper part just rolled over the head and shoulders. The face was covered by a black veil called *peča* (*peçe*).⁶⁰⁷ Rural women and maids of lower socioeconomic status when going out covered the head, shoulders and bosom with a large rectangular linen or hemp scarf; *bošča*.

The Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina brought gradual changes in the dress of Muslim women. As the result of the penetration of new, Central European fashion trends and new industrial fabrics traditional Muslim female costumes began to undergo changes, both in terms of cut and in terms of fabrics and patterns. Thus, the new cut of the *zar* coat similar to pelerine appeared, as well as striped and checked patterned coats. Furthermore, the World War I “saw the first instances of partial unveiling of Bosniak (Muslim) women, who, needing to secure the bare necessities of life, had to get employed as industrial workers.”⁶⁰⁸ These changes, that took place under the influence of modernization processes and the necessities of modern life, forced Bosnian Muslim intellectuals to rethink and to redefine the traditional notions of woman’s role, but also their own identity and the place of Bosnian Muslim in the modern world.

Second, the focus and interest of in the issue of veiling were certainly linked to the emergence of worldwide European and Muslim discussions on that issue in the late 19th century, where the veil came to symbolize both the perceived flaws and virtues of Muslim societies and Islam—a topic to be discussed in the following section. To properly understand

605 Aida Abadžić Hodžić, “Kultura odijevanja u Bosni i Hercegovini na prijelazu iz 19. u 20. stoljeće: uloga i značaj ilustracija i priloga u časopisu Nada (1895.–1903.),” in *Odjeća kao simbol identiteta*, ed. Hošić Irfan (Bihać: Gradska galerija, 2011), 23.

606 *Jašmak* covered the face up to the eyes and was fastened at the back of the head, while a *čember* covered forehead down to the eyebrows. A *dušeme* covered the whole head and flowed down the *feredža*. Some of the wealthier women wore, instead of a *jašmak*, a *peča*, that is to say a rectangular piece of cloth with slits for the eyes. See: Svetlana Bajić, “The Culture of Covering the Woman in the Balkans in the Ethnographic Collection of the National Museum in Sarajevo. Bosniak (Muslim) Garments for the Street – Headscarf, *Feredža*, *Zar*,...” in *The Hidden world of Balkan Women*, eds. Mirjana Menković and Svetlana Bajić (Sarajevo: Institute for Islamic Tradition of Bosniaks, 2014), 54.

607 Bajić, “The Culture of Covering the Woman in the Balkans,” 56.

608 Bajić, “The Culture of Covering the Woman in the Balkans,” 60.

Bosnian Muslim discussions on veiling and their interconnectedness with broader concerns over identity, tradition, and modernity, it is essential to note that, since the late 19th century, Muslim women's attire has been transformed in diverse global narratives into "the key measure by which to judge a society's modernity."⁶⁰⁹ Furthermore, as Bronwyn Winter has demonstrated, it also has served as "the litmus test of cultural and moral values, of their preservation or loss."⁶¹⁰



Fig. 1. Outdoor shot of Muslim women wearing light-coloured dresses (*zar*) and dark, face veils (*peča*). Sarajevo, date unknown, somewhere between 1920 and 1950.

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609 Sahar Amer, *What is Veiling?* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 2014): 5.

610 Bronwyn Winter, *Hijab & the Republic: Uncovering the French Headscarf Debate* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2008): 21.



Fig. 2. A group of women is walking in the street near Marijin Dvor (Mary's house) in Sarajevo. One of them is wearing an urban skirt suit; a black veil is covering her face and she is wearing black gloves. The girl next to her is wearing an urban dress. Two other women are wearing veiled robes (*zar*) and also black veils covering their faces. Uncirculated postcard. Undated, but between 1920 and 1950.

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6.1. Veil in Global Muslim Discourses on Reform and Renewal of Islam

In the late 19th century, global discussions on the face veiling among Muslims arose, differing significantly from previous conversations on the topic as the veil took on a more profound symbolic meaning. Before the 19th century, there were disagreements among Muslim scholars regarding the dress code for women. However, they debated issues such as the appropriate attire for women and which parts of the female body could be exposed, mainly in relation to women's sexuality and nature.⁶¹¹

611 Freyer Stowasser, *Women in the Qur'an*, 91–94; 127–128.

The late 19th and early 20th century discussions within Muslim communities imbued the veil with multiple symbolic meanings, closely tied to the identity of Muslims, the role of Islam in modern societies, and comparisons between Islam and the West. These global disputes about the face veil highlights the veil's unique significance, as it became a focal point in discussions about how Muslims view themselves and their heritage in a rapidly changing world.

It is widely accepted in the Western scholarship that colonial and Orientalist narratives of Muslim women from the late 19th century which in general portrayed Muslim cultures as exotic and alien, played a role in turning the issue of veiling into a matter of cultural and religious authenticity, by describing the veil not merely as a cultural item but as a crucial and oppressive aspect of Islamic practice.⁶¹² According to Leila Ahmed, the Western perceptions which portrayed the veil both as a quintessential Islamic symbol and as a sign of Islam's oppressive nature, have profoundly impacted internal debates within Muslim communities. She asserts that this framing has turned the veil into a contentious issue central to Muslim discussions about the essence of Islam, its role in the modern world and modernity.⁶¹³ The veil from the late 19th century has emerged as a central symbol for various groups within Muslim societies—reformists, conservatives, revivalists, feminists, secular elites among others—who strategically appropriated and interpreted this issue to demonstrate either their authenticity or modernity.⁶¹⁴ While Ahmed has correctly recognized the significant role that European colonial and Orientalist narratives played in positioning the issue of face veiling at the centre of internal Muslim debates and in attributing immense symbolic significance to this particular item of clothing, I hold that Ahmed has overestimated the role of Western discourses in the constructions of the Muslim narratives on veiling. Her interpretation of Muslim debates on the veil, particularly reformists discourses from the late 19th and early 20th century, as simply a defensive reaction to or imitation of European narratives overlooks the fact that various Muslim perspectives on this issue were firmly embedded in broader Muslim conversations about backwardness, moral decline, and the progress of the Muslim world in the late 19th century in which issues of (re)interpretations of the cultural and religious heritage was of the crucial importance.

Similarly to European narratives, Muslim reformists from diverse regions identified the face veil, usually worn by well-off urban women who could afford seclusion, as a primary

612 Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 152; Fadwa El Guindi, "Veiling Resistance," *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, eds. Reina Lewis and Sara Mills (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 595–596; Ernst, *Following Muhammad*, 148.

613 Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 144–168.

614 Lila Abu-Lughod, "Modesty Discourses. Overview," in *Encyclopedia of Women & Islamic Cultures*, ed. Suad Joseph, vol. 2, *Family, Law and Politics* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 494–498. About strategic appropriations of the veil in the case of Turkey see: Kandiyoti, "The End of Empire," 22–48; about Iran see: Najmabadi, "Hazards of Modernity and Morality," 48–77.

indicator of Muslim society's backwardness and generally advocated for its abolishment.⁶¹⁵ However, their criticism of this practice was founded on entirely different grounds than European criticisms. The link between the veil and backwardness was situated within the larger reformist attempt to make a differentiation between cultural practices and essences of Islam, which made the topic highly significant in intra-Muslim discussions on true Islam.

While generally in Muslim reformists discourses the face veil was considered to be a part of traditional cultural practices, Muslim conservatives invested it with the value of religious command. Conservatives advocated it as an authentic Islamic practice, of the utmost importance for maintaining separate Islamic identity and morality of Muslims.⁶¹⁶ Reformist criticism of face veil and the advocacy for unveiling were thus perceived by conservative circles as a direct attack on the very foundations of Muslim morality and identity, as well as a replication of Western views.⁶¹⁷

The differing perspectives on the face veil in reformist and conservative discourses were primarily connected to varying interpretations of the historical background of the practice, divergent interpretations of key Qur'ānic verses traditionally interpreted to advocate the face veiling, and their differing views on morality.

One of the most recurrent themes in reformist narratives related to the veil was their attempt to demonstrate that early Muslim adoption of face veiling was influenced significantly by the cultures Muslim encountered in the early centuries of Islam.⁶¹⁸ This argument, which also gained wide acceptance in Bosnian Muslim discussions, as I will later show, asserts that the veil was adopted and institutionalized due to external cultural influences. The reformists strategically aimed to demonstrate the non-Islamic origins of the face veil in order to challenge those who believed that it was an inherently Islamic practice.

Furthermore, reformists authors challenged the idea that Islam requires the covering of the entire body, including the face using the standard reformists methodology of returning to the Qur'ān. They shared the conviction that this particular style of dress was not explicitly required by the Qur'ān.⁶¹⁹ The reformist approach to the veiling issue involved reinterpreting verse 24:31 and 33:59 of the Qur'ān that had traditionally been cited to justify the covering of women's faces. Their reinterpretation examined the social and historical context in which

615 Stephanie Cronin, "Introduction: Coercion or Empowerment? Anti-Veiling Campaigns: a Comparative Perspective," in *Anti-Veiling Campaigns in the Muslim World Gender, Modernism and the Politics of Dress*, ed. Stephanie Cronin (London: Routledge, 2014), 5–7.

616 Amer, *What is Veiling*, 3–5.

617 Cronin, "Introduction: Coercion or Empowerment?" 7–8.

618 See: Amin, *The Liberation of Women; and, the New Woman*, 36–37; Ali, *The Spirit of Islam*, 248.

619 Amin. *The Liberation of Women; and, the New Woman*, 37–45; Gail Minault, "Sayyid Mumtaz Ali and 'Huquq un-Niswan': An Advocate of Women's Rights in Islam in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Modern Asian Studies* 24, no. 1 (1990): 147–172.

these verses were originally revealed. Since moral laxity was viewed as one of the main characteristics of pre-Islamic Arabian society, reformists argued that these verses aimed to encourage and promote behaviour as well as a dress code based on high moral standards and not specific type of clothing.⁶²⁰

As we have already seen in the previous chapter the global reformist discourse on education emphasized the significance of women in upholding the moral values of the community and transmitting them to future generations. However, the reformists' discussions surrounding female dress code and veiling was primarily rooted in the notion that both men and women are equally accountable for preserving the moral fabric of society. The conservative belief that complete face veiling and gender segregation are necessary to maintain Islamic moral standards was generally contested by reformists who emphasized that the Qur'ān's directives concerning modest behaviour do not only apply to women, but also to men. The reformist authors put an emphasis on verse 24:30 of the Qur'ān, which orders men "to lower their gaze and to be modest." This specific verse was commonly cited by reformists as evidence that the Qur'ān's injunctions regarding modest dress directed towards women in other verses cannot be interpreted as a mandate to cover the face, as the verse in question would be redundant if that were the case.⁶²¹ According to reformists, face veiling was a cultural practice that exceeds the broad parameters of modest behaviour outlined in the Qur'ān.

The publication of Egyptian intellectual Qāsim Amīn's pivotal text, *The Liberation of Woman*, in 1899, sparked considerable controversy, notably due to his advocacy of the unveiling of Muslim women's faces. Although Amīn's views regarding the veil have frequently been interpreted as being internalisation and replication of the European, colonialist European criticisms of the veil, his criticism was to a large extent founded upon the general reformist understanding of true modesty as an inner virtue, based on self-control, rather than externally imposed through practices such as veiling and segregation.⁶²²

Just like the conservative circles, Qāsim Amīn linked the veil to morality; however, in opposition to conservative circles, his aim was to point out that a certain form of the veil still does not guarantee inner morality, nor does it necessarily reflect it. Qāsim Amīn depicted the conservative insistence on a particular style of dress as a form of hypocrisy. In his discourse, the veil represented not only backwardness, illiteracy, and subordination of Muslim women, but also false morality. He associated the veil directly with immoral conduct,

620 Ali, *The Spirit of Islam*, 249–251; Minault, "Sayyid Mumtaz Ali and 'Huquq un-Niswan,'" 160–161.

621 Minault, "Sayyid Mumtaz Ali and 'Huquq un-Niswan,'" 147–172; Amin, *The Liberation of Women; and, the New Woman*, 42, Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 133–134.

622 On interpretations of Amin's advocacy of unveiling as borrowing of European ideas see: Katherine Bullock, *Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil: Challenging Historical and Modern Stereotypes* (London: IIIT, 2002), 27 Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 161.

aiming to illustrate how the veil can facilitate actions that may be considered unethical or improper by providing a means to conceal one's identity or intentions. This association was made to argue that the practice of veiling does not inherently prevent immoral behaviour but instead may inadvertently enable it under certain circumstances.⁶²³ Whereas the veil was viewed in European narratives as a representation of Islam, Qāsim Amīn's discourse portrayed it mainly as a symbol of a particular, and in his view, misconstrued interpretation of Islam prevalent among conservative religious scholars.

This perspective reflects the broader reformist viewpoint that morality cannot be imposed externally. Rather, it was considered to be the result of rational self-discipline.⁶²⁴ While Amīn's discourse shared some similarities with European discourses regarding the depiction of Muslim women's position in Egypt and the negative connotations surrounding the veil, it also intersected with the discourse of Muslim authors who criticized social and cultural practices related to women within a broader critique of conservative religious scholars' inability to convey Islam's true moral values. Like Amīn' Muslim other scholars like Mumtāz 'Alī questioned the conservative view the veiling was essential to maintaining Islamic morality. He contended that such an idea is un-Islamic since it implies that Muslim men and women cannot discipline their lust or restrain their passion. For Mumtāz 'Alī, maintaining moral standards was largely dependent on self-control rather than the imposition of external constraints.⁶²⁵ This understanding of true morality certainly was an expression of the growth of self-consciousness and self-examination that Francis Robison considers to be the key element of modern Islamic reform. The true belief and morality had to be self-conscious one.⁶²⁶

The request to abandon the practice of full-face veiling was accompanied by a specific emphasis on its negative outcomes that impact various aspects of women's lives, including their health, education, intercommunal trust, and economic and legal status. Face veiling, when combined with gender segregation, was alleged to restrict women's ability to improve their social status by excluding them from education and requiring them to engage in legal and business transactions through intermediaries.⁶²⁷

The Bosnian Muslim intellectual and religious community actively participated in the debates concerning the Muslim women veiling, its appropriate form, social function, and its religious authenticity, as we shall see in the next sections of this study. Reformist ideas described here were both accepted and developed, as well as criticized.

623 Amin. *The Liberation of Women; and, the New Woman*, 42–43.

624 Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 133–134.

625 Minault, "Sayyid Mumtaz 'Ali and 'Huquq un-Niswan,' " 161.

626 Robinson, "Islamic Reform and Modernities in South Asia," 272–273.

627 Minault, "Sayyid Mumtaz Ali and 'Huquq un-Niswan,' " 162; Amin, *The Liberation of Women; and the New Woman*, 40.

6.2. The Chronology of the Face Veiling Debate: Main Actors and Positions in Bosnian Context

In 1918, the reformist Dževad Sulejmanpašić published a book entitled *Muslimansko žensko pitanje: Jedan prilog njegovom rješenju*, which enthusiastically promoted the unveiling of Muslim women faces as a prerequisite for the emancipation of Bosnian Muslims. The publication encountered a hostile and adverse response from the broader public. A group of Muslims burned the publication in the yard of the Husrev-bay mosque and threw rocks at the author's residence.⁶²⁸ Even though Sulejmanpašić' advocacy of unveiling provoked a strong public backlash; Bosnian Muslim intellectuals and religious scholars did not engage seriously with this issue until the late 1920s.

According to scholars such as Xavier Bougarel, Enes Karić, and Adnan Jahić, the public lecture delivered by Mehmed Džemaludin Čaušević in 1927 marked the beginning of a long intra-Muslim public debate on the issue of unveiling.⁶²⁹ The lecture was given during a preparatory meeting for the congress of Muslim intellectuals scheduled for the September 1928. Congress had an important aim of gathering secular educated intellectuals and religious scholars who were to propose a set of reforms in Muslim community. During the event, Čaušević expressed his favourable views on the social reforms that were being implemented in Turkey, particularly regarding the discouragement of the face veil.⁶³⁰ According to Bosnian scholar Jahić, Čaušević's lecture and subsequent public statements on the topic of veiling in newspapers *Politika* and *Jugoslavenski list* were of great importance for the intellectual development of Muslims, as they initiated the publication of books, pamphlets, and articles on the subject of veiling written by both Čaušević's opponents and supporters. In these public statements, Čaušević explicitly claimed that the Muslim woman was not required by Islamic precepts to cover her face.⁶³¹ While I acknowledge the significance of Čaušević's statements on veiling in initiating a broader debate on this issue, I do not completely agree with Jahić's assertion that it opened the door to free and critical thinking about social and religious issues among Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁶³² The fact remains that many socio-religious matters had already been extensively debated among Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina well before 1927. However, I agree with Jahić that Čaušević's statements contributed to intensifying intra-Muslim public discussion and increasing conservative Muslim participation in the public sphere.

628 See Adnan Jahić, "Modernizam Dževada Sulejmanpašića," *Bošnjačka pismohrana. Časopis za povijest i kulturu Bošnjaka u Hrvatskoj* 5, no. 17/20 (2005): 135.

629 Xavier Bougarel, "Reis i veo," *Historijska traganja*, no. 06 (2010): 71–72; Karić, "Islamic Thought in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the 20th Century," 418; Adnan Jahić, *Islamska zajednica u Bosni i Hercegovini za vrijeme monarhističke Jugoslavije: (1918–1941)* (Zagreb: Bošnjačka nacionalna zajednica za Grad Zagreb i Zagrebačku županiju: 2010), 254. Giomi, "Domesticating Kemalism," 168.

630 Giomi, "Domesticating Kemalism," 168.

631 Jahić, *Islamska zajednica u Bosni i Hercegovini za vrijeme monarhističke Jugoslavije*, 254.

632 Jahić, *Islamska zajednica u Bosni i Hercegovini za vrijeme monarhističke Jugoslavije*, 254.

Due to his prominent position among religious officials and the widespread acceptance of his message among Bosnian reformists, his conservative opponents, who generally opposed public discussions on issues they considered exclusive to religious scholars, resorted to using modern print media that could reach a broader audience. Furthermore, they adopted a new style of argumentation, employing simpler arguments more suitable for print media. Čaušević's statements played a crucial role in the establishment of the journal *Hikmet*, the important platform for conservative Muslim religious officials, as it emerged in response to his views on veiling.⁶³³ The importance of *Hikmet* lies in the fact that it, as Fabio Giomi notes, challenged the monopoly of Muslim reformists over the public sphere.⁶³⁴

Furthermore, the intense public debate between one of the most distinguished officials of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Islamic community and leading conservative religious scholars reveals the divisions within the class of religious scholars, which clearly demonstrate that Bosnian Muslim debates cannot be oversimplified as a conflict between secularly educated Muslims and religious authorities.

As Čaušević's position on the issue of Muslim women veiling caused a great turmoil within the class of religious scholars the *Islamic Electoral Curia*, the body in charge of electing the Reis-ul-ulema, on 10 July 1928 issued a statement entitled *Takrir Islamske izborne kurije* (The Resolution of Islamic Electoral Curia).⁶³⁵ While the statement affirmed Čaušević's position that face veil was not an Islamic religious duty, it nevertheless recommended it as a kind of shield against immorality. More importantly, this statement openly condemned public polemics over veiling holding that it was, as an important religious and social issue, to be discussed exclusively within established Muslim institutions. The statement openly warned Čaušević that he had exceeded his authority and that he should not issue such declarations any longer.⁶³⁶ While Čaušević's opponents saw this statement as confirmation of their views, he argued that it "does not reject [his] principal opinion that a Muslim women who is conversant with the study of science, the acquisition of a craft and other commercial skills, may have her face unveiled and her hands bare."⁶³⁷

The lack of clarity in this statement resulted in the continuation of public debates on the issue, and it is not surprising that they persisted throughout late 1920s and the 1930s. On one side there were those who supported Čaušević's approach, such as secular educated intellectuals Osman Nuri Hadžić (1869–1937), and Mehmed Begović (1904–1990) and religious scholars such as Husein Đozo (1912–1982) and Abdulah Ajni Bušatlić (1871–1946). On the other side there were the advocates of Islamic conservatism who viewed the veil

633 Giomi, "Domesticating Kemalism," 179.

634 Giomi, "Domesticating Kemalism," 178.

635 Editorial board "Takrir isl. izborne kurije," *Novi Behar* 2, no. 6 (1928): 81–82.

636 Editorial board "Takrir isl. izborne kurije," 81–82.

637 Karić, "Islamic Thought in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the 20th Century," 428.

not only as a religious obligation but also as a symbol of distinct Muslim identity. Among the most important conservative scholars who publicly opposed Čaušević statements and reformists views on veiling in general were Ali Riza Karabeg (1872–1944), Sejfullah Proho (1858–1932), and Ibrahim Hakki Čokić (1871–1948).

During the inter-war period, the state remained neutral and did not take a stance on the issue of veiling among Muslims. However, the situation drastically changed after the end of World War II and the establishment of the communist regime, which openly promoted campaigns that encouraged unveiling of the Muslim women faces and eventually prohibited the practice altogether. When the issue of veiling came again to the centre of attention of Muslim intellectuals in 1940s, it was directly caused by the attempt of the new Yugoslav communist regime to eliminate this practice. Andreja Mesarič has shown that the post-World War II Yugoslav government's attempt to eradicate veiling was a part of its larger effort to push religious symbols and ethnic differences to the margins of public space in order to build a modern Yugoslav state, in which religions were not to have any official role or public influence. Besides, Mesarič, Hadžiristić and Simić argue that veil was not perceived by communist regime only as a religious symbol, but also as a remnant of Turkish burden, "a relic of mediaeval times brought to the region by 'backward Asian tribes.'" ⁶³⁸ Therefore, these scholars understand communist attempts to eradicate this practice also as an effort to rid Bosnian society of outward evidence of "foreign, 'Turkish' invasion." ⁶³⁹ In 1947, the *Antifascist Front of Women*, a state-sponsored organisation, launched campaigns in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as in Macedonia and Kosovo, encouraging Muslim women to abandon the veil as a backward and oppressive tradition that was the biggest obstacle to liberation of Muslim women. ⁶⁴⁰

Muslim reformist theologian Ibrahim Fejić (1879–1962) who served as Reis-ul-ulema from 1947 to 1952 endorsed these campaigns in his inaugural address on 12 September 1947 stating that "women cannot achieve the full expression of [the equality won by the liberation war] as they are inhibited by wearing the veil and gown." ⁶⁴¹ In 1950, the official journal of the Islamic community in Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Glasnik Vrhovnog Islamskog Starješinstva*, published several articles that discussed the issue of female veiling from religious, social, and cultural perspectives. The articles unanimously supported the unveiling of women, in contrast to the inter-war period when there were opposing views.

638 Andreja Mesarič, "Wearing Hijab in Sarajevo: Dress Practices and the Islamic Revival in Post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina," *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures* 22, no. 2 (2013): 17–18; Tea Hadžiristić, "Unveiling Muslim Women in Socialist Yugoslavia: the Body between Socialism, Secularism, and Colonialism," *Religion and Gender* 7, no. 2 (2017): 192; Ivan Simić, "Soviet Influences on Yugoslav Gender Policies, 1945–1955" (PhD diss., University College London, 2016), 151.

639 Mesarič, "Wearing Hijab in Sarajevo," 18. See also: Hadžiristić, "Unveiling Muslim Women," 192.

640 Marko Attila Hoare, *The Bosnian Muslims in the Second World War: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 374. For more on these campaigns see: Senija Milišić, "O pitanju emancipacije muslimanske žene u Bosni i Hercegovini," *Prilozi* 28 (1999): 235–240.

641 Hadžiristić, "Unveiling Muslim Women in Socialist Yugoslavia," 192.

This was likely due to the dominance of the Marxist ideology in the public sphere, and the fact that the Islamic community was under state control in the post-WWII period. As noted by Dževada Šuško and Hüsrev Tabak, the state gradually nationalized its property and interfered in the elections of its high officials, ensuring that the Islamic community was directly run by those loyal to the regime.⁶⁴²

On September 28, 1950, due to the limited success of the veil lifting campaigns, the People's Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina passed a law that prohibited the wearing of face veils, with the punishment being hefty fines and imprisonment for up to three months.⁶⁴³ The law applied not only to women, but also to family members who forced or encouraged them to wear a veil. This event symbolically marked the end of an era of deep public confrontations between Muslims of different intellectual orientations on veiling. This law, as Enes Karić argues, not only "abolished the face veil but also eliminated any form of theoretical debate on the subject, particularly those that might advocate for wearing such attire."⁶⁴⁴

6.3. Veil: From a Symbol of Backwardness to an Expression of Moral Superiority of Muslims

A number of recent studies have demonstrated the close relationship between modern Muslim discourses about veiling and narratives of identity, morality, and progress. It has been highlighted by Mary Neuburger that the veiling debates in Egypt, Turkey, the Balkans, and Russia took place within the context of broader discussions concerning progress and the Westernization of society.⁶⁴⁵ Beth Baron in her analysis of modern discussions on veiling that occurred in early 20th century Egypt has demonstrated that the issue of veiling was inextricably linked to morality and progress. As she argues, conservatives viewed the veil as a symbol of modesty, while reformists viewed it as a symbol of Muslim backwardness and as an obstacle to Muslim progress.⁶⁴⁶ According to Marianne Kamp and Noor Borbieva, proponents of unveiling in early 20th century Central Asia viewed the veiling and seclusion of women as hindrances to women's education and social progress. In contrast, those who

642 Hüsrev Tabak, "A History of 'Who Speaks for Islam?' in Bosnia - Herzegovina: An Official Versus Popular Islam Debate," *Gazi Akademik Bakış* 10, no. 20 (2017): 303; Dževada Šuško, *A Model for Europe? History and Practice of Islam in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2017), 9–10.

643 After Bosnia and Herzegovina, laws prohibiting the full-face veil were passed separately in all Yugoslavian republics with a Muslim population. See: Ivan Simić, "Soviet Influences on Yugoslav Gender Policies," 155–156; Fikret Karčić, "Primjena zakona o zabrani nošenja zara i feredže BiH," *Novi Muallim*, 14, no. 56 (2013): 50–56

644 Karić, "Islamski reformistički pokreti kod Bošnjaka," 62.

645 Mary Neuburger, "Difference unveiled: Bulgarian national imperatives and re-dressing of Muslim women, 1878–1989," in *Anti-Veiling Campaigns in the Muslim World: Gender, Modernism and the Politics of Dress*, ed. Stephanie Cronin (London: Routledge, 2014), 254.

646 Beth Baron, "Unveiling in Early Twentieth Century Egypt: Practical and Symbolic Considerations," *Middle Eastern Studies* 25, no. 3 (1989): 378–379.

advocated veiling saw it as a way to prevent social chaos that would result from allowing women to reveal their faces.⁶⁴⁷

The debates in Bosnia and Herzegovina mirrored the global discourse on veiling that Muslims engaged in from the late 19th century. Bosnian scholar Đermana Šeta has demonstrated that face veiling was a central issue in modern Bosnian intra-Muslim debates during the late 1920s and throughout 1930s. She has shown that Muslim intellectuals of various orientations made use of the topic to legitimize their vision of true Islam and the future of Bosnian Muslims during this period.⁶⁴⁸ Šeta's research reveals profound ambivalence within the Bosnian Muslim community regarding veiling, reflecting contradictory views on traditional Muslim lifestyles and the impact of European modernity on Bosnian Muslim identity and morality.⁶⁴⁹

Bosnian scholar Šefik Kurdić these Bosnian debates from the first half of the 20th century describes as a part of a broader disagreement among Muslim intellectuals in Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding the interpretation of Islam and its role in society.⁶⁵⁰ Xavier Bougarel's research depicts Bosnian veiling debates as a medium through which Bosnian Muslims expressed not only different, but opposing views on Islam, the Muslim world but also on Europe.⁶⁵¹

Whether the veil was an oppressive cultural custom that hindered Muslim progress, or a manifestation and shield of Muslim morality and identity was the central point of contention between proponents and critics of veiling in both global and local Bosnian contexts.

In the forthcoming sections, I will demonstrate that Bosnian proponents of unveiling, linked it with liberation and progress. Conversely, those who opposed it perceived unveiling as a fundamental loss of religious and cultural identity, leading to complete Westernization.

6.3.1. Veil and the Idea of Progress

One of the central features of modern reformist discourses about veiling in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the close connection between veiling and Muslim socio-political decline and economic backwardness. The face veil was associated with the practice of seclusion, which hindered women's education and their full participation in economic activities. In

647 Marianne Kamp and Noor Borbieva, "Veiling and unveiling in Central Asia. Beliefs and Practices, Tradition and Modernity," in *The Routledge International Handbook to Veils and Veiling Practices*, eds. Anna-Mari Almila and David Inglis (London: Routledge 2018), 91.

648 Jahić, *Islamska zajednica u Bosni i Hercegovini za vrijeme monarhističke Jugoslavije*, 253; Đermana Šeta, *Zašto marama*, 82.

649 Šeta, *Zašto marama*, 87.

650 Kurdić, "Percepcija sunneta," 25.

651 Bougarel, "Reis i veo," 84.

their discourse veiling and education were viewed as mutually exclusive.⁶⁵² In view of the fact that women were considered to be crucial to social progress, unveiling was advocated not only as a necessary means for educational emancipation of women, but as a means for intellectual and economic progress of the whole Muslim community. Attack on veiling was based upon the belief that it was a backward custom, incorrectly identified as a religious obligation that condemned the entire Muslim female population to illiteracy, and as a consequence, the whole community to economic and intellectual poverty.⁶⁵³

I have identified three distinct strategies employed by Muslim reformist advocates of unveiling to argue for the strong interconnectedness between the practice of veiling and Muslim socio-economic status.

First, they draw attention to socio-economic context in which the practice of veiling appeared and became widespread among Muslims. They argued that the practices of seclusion and veiling were originally enforced on women from the urban, middle, and upper classes of the Middle East, under the influence of foreign cultures where they symbolized high social status.⁶⁵⁴ Focus on socio-economic context in which this practice emerged allowed them to argue that veiling was originally a marker of a high socio-economic status, and not of piety. Mehmed Begović argued that the primary reason behind the adoption of veiling by Arabs, which he regarded as having its origins in Persia, was the aspirations of women from privileged social strata to differentiate themselves through the adoption of exotic fashion trends that were considered more extravagant and attractive than the indigenous Arab customs they were accustomed to.⁶⁵⁵ It was not a moral motivation, according to Begović, but a desire to show prestige that stood behind women's readiness to accept the full-face veil.

Second, advocates of unveiling argued that the face veil was in general an urban phenomenon, typical for wealthier classes, rarely found among peasant Muslim women. Husein Brkić and Reis-ul-ulema Džemaludin Čaušević wrote that throughout the history peasant Muslim women in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as elsewhere, never strictly observed the practice of face veiling as they had to take part in the daily work of their households.⁶⁵⁶ The references to peasant Muslim women were to prove that the full-face veil was not a universal sign of piety or religious precept, but a cultural custom, closely related to socio-economic status.

652 Šeta, *Zašto marama*, 25. For more about connection between veiling and Muslim socio-political decline in global context see Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan*.

653 Dževad Sulejmanpašić, *Muslimansko žensko pitanje: Jedan prilog njegovu rješenju* (Sarajevo: Self-published 1918), 15; Džemaluddin, "Zajedničko poučavanje," 2–3.

654 Begović, *O položaju i dužnostima muslimanke prema islamskoj nauci*, 23–25; Husein S. Brkić, "Naše žensko pitanje," *Gajret*, no. 5 (1928): 73.

655 Begović, *O položaju i dužnostima muslimanke prema islamskoj nauci*, 25.

656 Brkić, "Naše žensko pitanje," 73; Čaušević "Drugi odgovor Reis-ul-uleme," 25–26.

As a third reason, they argued that the liberation of Muslim women from the face veil was crucial for increasing women's participation in the labour market, which would, in turn, lead to economic recovery for the entire Muslim community.⁶⁵⁷ The link between unveiling, the educational emancipation of the Muslims, and economic growth of Bosnian Muslims was particularly stressed by Dževad Sulejmanpašić. His contention was that Muslim women's active involvement in the workforce would have a significant economic impact on the entire community. In addition, it would serve as a deterrent to immoral and illicit activities like prostitution. This argument was based on the notion that the veil not only impedes women's progress but also perpetuates poverty, underdevelopment, and prostitution within the community.⁶⁵⁸

Sulejmanpašić claimed harmful effects of veiling on marital relationship and Muslim children's intellectual development and health. Similar to Qāsim Amīn in Egypt, Dževad Sulejmanpašić asserted that the veil hindered women's spiritual and intellectual growth and created a barrier between men and women. In his opinion, this led to marriages based on physical attraction rather than emotional connection and mutual understanding.⁶⁵⁹ Based on the concept of scientific motherhood, he argued that the veil hindered women's development as mothers. It was his opinion that veiling and seclusion restricted women's access to education, impairing their ability to pass on knowledge and authentic Islamic values to the next generation. Accordingly, the veil was portrayed as a threat to Bosnian Muslims' future.⁶⁶⁰

Despite the fact that Muslim reformists shared with Western discourses the idea that the veil is a contributing factor to Muslim backwardness, they differed in their focus on the veil's effects on religious consciousness. Reis-ul-ulema Čaušević presented face veiling as an obstacle to living in accordance with the precepts of Islam. He argued that veiling hindered the education of Muslim women, which he considered one of the essential duties in Islam.⁶⁶¹ Čaušević harshly condemned those circles who opposed female education and insisted on face veiling, describing them as formalist who were more concerned about female clothing, than about the dress of piety (*libās al-taqwā*); that is to say about the observation of God's laws.⁶⁶² As according to him education in all areas of knowledge, irrespective of their origin was endorsed by Qur'ān, he criticized Muslims, particularly conservative members of

657 See the report on discussions held during the 1928 Congress of Muslim Intellectuals in Sarajevo: "Kongres muslimana intelektualaca održan 6. i 7. septembra, prilikom proslave Gajretove dvadesetpetogodišnjice (nastavak)," *Gajret* 9 (1928): 326–332.

658 Sulejmanpašić, *Muslimansko žensko pitanje*, 30–32.

659 Sulejmanpašić, *Muslimansko žensko pitanje*, 27–29.

660 Sulejmanpašić, *Muslimansko žensko pitanje*, 27–29. See also: "Kongres muslimana intelektualaca održan 6. i 7. septembra, prilikom proslave Gajretove dvadesetpetogodišnjice (nastavak)," *Gajret* 9 (1928): 327.

661 Džemaluddin, "Zajedničko poučavanje," 2–3.

662 Džemaluddin, "Zajedničko poučavanje," 3.

'*ulamā*' class, for formalist insistence on the preservation of external customs and blamed them for neglecting God's laws.

The reformist view that the face veil impedes the education of Muslim women was subject to dispute. Mehmed Handžić in an article published in the revivalist journal *El-Hidaje* reinterpreted the early Islamic history as an era in which women were decently veiled, according to Islamic principles, and yet educated and more emancipated than modern Western women, to argue that it was not Muslim woman veil that kept them ignorant. Although he did not specifically address the causes of Muslim women's low level of education, he strongly rejected the notion that veiling was responsible for it.⁶⁶³ In this context attention should be drawn also to an article published under the pen name Razija in the journal *Biser* as early as 1914, long before the debate on unveiling of Muslim women gained prominent attention among Muslim intellectuals and religious scholars. This article, tries, as Stijn Vervaet argues, to strike a balance between the apparent need for community advancement and the preservation of already established traditional practices and forms of social life.⁶⁶⁴ It openly rejected idea that the face veil controls Muslim woman participation in the workforce and education and presented not the veil, but the specific social context as responsible for the low educational level of Muslim women. The proposed solution for the apparent female illiteracy and backwardness of the Muslims is the development of modern Muslim education in line with Islamic culture, described as the opposite to the Western, immoral culture.⁶⁶⁵ The article regarded the veil as a protector of morality, rather than an obstacle to Muslim education. As a result, it vehemently denounced the unveiling of Muslim women, describing it as a mindless imitation of European values and trends that inevitably lead to an erosion of the moral integrity of Muslim women.⁶⁶⁶

6.3.2. Veiling, Modesty and Morality

It is not surprising that the debate on veiling and its appropriate form was predominantly framed on moral grounds, given that in a number of cultures clothing, modesty, and morality are strongly related.⁶⁶⁷ Different studies have shown that all major religious groups view modesty as a moral and social value and seek to ensure it by defining appropriate dress codes for women.⁶⁶⁸ The notion of modest female dress in different religions generally includes covering of the body, hiding of the female body curves and secondary sexual

663 Handžić, "Položaj žene u islamu," 21.

664 Stijn Vervaet, "Između hrvatstva, srpstva i panislamizma."

665 Razija, "O ženskom pitanju," *Biser* 2, no. 17/18 (1914): 282.

666 Razija, "O ženskom pitanju," 282.

667 For more on a relationship between clothing, modesty and morality see: Gregory G. Bolich, *Crossdressing in Context*, vol.1, *Dress and Gender* (Raleigh, North Carolina: Psyche's Press, 2007), 90–107.

668 Linda B. Arthur, "Religion and Dress" in *Encyclopedia of Clothing and Fashion*, ed. Valerie Steele, vol. 3, *Occult Dress to Zoran* (Farmington Hills, MI : Charles Scribner's Sons, 2005), 98; Zohreh Sadatmoosavi, Wan Zailan Kamaruddin Wan Ali and Mohammad Ali Shokouhi, "The Conception of Modesty and Modest Dress," *Afkar* 18, no. 2 (2016): 229–270; Lynne Hume, *The Religious Life of Dress: Global Fashion and Faith. Dress, Body, Culture* (London: Bloomsbury 2013).

characteristics; and the covering of women's hair because of its association with female sexuality.⁶⁶⁹

The use of clothing extends beyond mere coverage of the body, as it also serves as a means of expressing one's attitude towards established social and moral norms, whether it involves adhering to or opposing them. Additionally, clothing can serve as a symbol of adaptation to social changes.

Furthermore, the close reading of modern Muslim discussions on veiling shows that the issue of veiling served as a kind of tool used not only for discursive (re)definition of virtuous Muslim woman, but also of collective morality and identity. Women in modern Bosnian Muslim discourses on veiling, as elsewhere in Muslim world, were turned not only into markers of collective identity but also into, as Helie Lucas puts it, the very stakes of cultural competition.⁶⁷⁰ The veil of the Muslim woman was the focus of the largest cultural contest, in which the moral standing of Islamic and modern European civilization was measured.

Similarly to Muslim reformists from the wider Muslim world, Bosnian reformists created what Stephanie Cronin dubbed as "the concept of the metaphorical 'veil of chastity,'" by emphasizing moral superiority of unveiled woman "who defended her own chastity through an internalized morality instilled through education."⁶⁷¹ Bosnian reformists engaged in the redefinition of true Islamic morality arguing that it was not a particular form of dress, but a proper moral upbringing that was an essential part of Islam. Deeds and conduct based on Islamic moral values were to reflect the faith of Muslims, not particular types of clothing. Dževad Sulejmanpašić argued that veiling impeded the cultivation of critical consciousness necessary to combat the erosion of moral values in modern society. According to him, only a proper family upbringing and modern education could protect Bosnian Muslim women from the modern deviations that had already begun to infiltrate local society.⁶⁷² Face veiling was criticized as failing to distinguish between immutable Islamic principles and inherited customs, thereby causing erroneous associations between Islam and specific symbols of local culture. In words of Reis-ul-ulema Čaušević the most important attire for Muslim women, and men alike, was good religious education and the purity of their hearts.⁶⁷³

Reformist advocates of unveiling sought to challenge the traditional link between veiling, modesty, and Islamic morality by emphasizing the association between veiling and immoral

669 Linda B. Arthur, "Religion and Dress," 98.

670 Marie-Aimée Hélie-Lucas, "The Preferential Symbol for Islamic Identity: Women in Muslim Personal Laws," in *Identity Politics and Women Cultural Reassertions and Feminisms in International Perspective*, ed. Valentine M. Moghadam (Boulder CO: Westview, 1994), 391–407.

671 Cronin, "Introduction: Coercion or Empowerment?" 17.

672 Sulejmanpašić, "Prodiranje sveta u život muslimanke," 285–286.

673 Džemaludin Čaušević, "Odgovor Reis-ul-uleme Džematskom medžlisu," in *Sarajevski džematski medžlis i Reisove izjave*, ed. Hadži Mujaga Merhemici (Sarajevo: Hrvatska tiskara, 1928), 13.

behaviour, such as prostitution. Dževad Sulejmanpašić's work is a notable example of this approach. In Sulejmanpašić's perspective, veiled women represented not only a hindrance to modernization and progress but, more significantly, a complete opposition to authentic Islamic morality.⁶⁷⁴ Veiling was not viewed, contrary to traditional and conservative interpretations, as a shield against immorality, but rather as a practice that condemned women to prostitution. He argued that veiling was responsible for the proliferation of prostitution due to two primary reasons.

The first argument he made was that veiling and seclusion of Muslim women, as obstacles to their education and employment, condemned them to a life of poverty and immoral means of earning. According to him, for women who remained without any male protection due to the Great War or repudiation by their husbands, prostitution was the only option, as they did not only lack the necessary skills to enter the labour market, but they also lived in an environment that condemned women's education and work outside the home.⁶⁷⁵ In order to assert that formal education was not a threat to Islamic morality, but rather a type of protection of Muslim women's moral integrity, he argued that prostitutes were primarily uneducated, illiterate women from lower social classes lacking the skills necessary for the labour market.⁶⁷⁶

A second argument he made was that the imposition of strict clothing regulations on women had a detrimental effect on their moral development. It was his perspective that strict external controls placed on women prevented the development of their self-discipline and made them susceptible to irresponsible behaviours.⁶⁷⁷ Sulejmanpašić espoused a typical reformists view according to which true morality was a matter of controlling one's own passions and desires, rather than trying to control others' behaviour.

In contrast, conservative and revivalist discourses considered veiling to be an indicator and a guardian of distinctive Islamic morality.⁶⁷⁸ One of the most important strategies used by Muslim advocates of veiling in Bosnia and Herzegovina was the discursive construction of an immoral West. The West was equated with sexual immorality and the collapse of traditional norms, which they further directly linked to women's emancipation and modern fashion trends.⁶⁷⁹ Hoffman Ladd has shown that advocates of veiling in different parts of Muslim world frequently employed this tactics of pointing out to "the collapse of sexual moral standards in the West as an indication of what will happen to Muslims

674 Sulejmanpašić, *Muslimansko žensko pitanje*, 16–24.

675 Sulejmanpašić, *Muslimansko žensko pitanje*, 18–19; 30–32.

676 Sulejmanpašić, *Muslimansko žensko pitanje*, 32.

677 Sulejmanpašić, *Muslimansko žensko pitanje*, 19–23.

678 Chameran [Ibrahim.Hakki Čokić], "O napadaju na 'takrir' i hodže," pt. 2, *Hikmet* 1, no.3 (1929): 94; Muhamed Zahirović, "Kuda vodi otkrivanje lica muslimanki," *Hikmet* 2, no. 14 (1930): 47; Mustafa Forto, *Otkrivanje muslimanskog ženskinja*, 8.

679 Jahić, "Pokriti ili otkriti," 51–53.

if they pursue the same standards of immodest dress and integration of the sexes.”⁶⁸⁰ In that manner conservative Bosnian scholar Ibrahim Hakki Čokić (1871–1948), claimed that 60 percent of the population in Croatia had venereal diseases, which he attributed to the proliferation of modern trends among women. According to him, venereal diseases were modern European phenomena that did not exist in traditional Muslim societies.⁶⁸¹ While the Islamic religious tradition was the fundamental frame of reference for conservatives, or “the basis of their identity and authority,”⁶⁸² as noted by Muhammad Qasim Zaman, Čokić’s defence of the face veil also illustrates Karen Bauer’s observation that conservatives often selectively employed modern, scientific justifications and non-Muslim sources to reinforce their views.⁶⁸³ Although Čokić openly criticized reformists for incorporating foreign theories and authors into their works, he did not hesitate to reference certain Western practices and cite non-Muslim authors to prove the social benefits of veiling. For example, in 1928, he praised the Italian regime for promoting a decent dress code for women, concluding that even “civilized Europe”, as he wrote, understands the close connection between women’s attire and the preservation of traditional morals.⁶⁸⁴ Margot Badran’s research on Egypt indicates that Čokić’s approval of the imposition of women’s dress codes by Italian regime was not unique. An article published in conservative journal *The Woman’s Awakening* in 1929 similarly advocated veiling “pointing out that both the pope and Mussolini insisted on women’s modest attire.”⁶⁸⁵

Furthermore, Čokić invoked the arguments of certain Serbian physician Aleksandar Kostić, who harshly criticized modern European culture for its emphasis on physical pleasures and fashion trends. Čokić cited Kostić’s thesis that the hedonism of modern culture was to blame for the supposed physical and spiritual deterioration of European women. He used this to argue that Muslims must safeguard their strict rules on female dress and behaviour in order to protect women from moral decline and preserve the moral integrity of Bosnian Muslims.⁶⁸⁶

A similar type of argumentation we find also in the works of other conservatives who referred to European intellectual tradition, from Aristotle to Schopenhauer, to claim that women as physically and morally weaker beings, require special protection of their morality.⁶⁸⁷

680 Hoffman Ladd, “Polemics on the Modesty and Segregation of Women,” 32.

681 Ibrahim Hakki Čokić, *O teset-turu*, (Tuzla: Štamparija Petrović, 1928), 11.

682 Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam*, 10.

683 Bauer, *Gender Hierarchy in the Qur’ān*, 7–8.

684 Čokić, *O teset-turu*, 11.

685 Margot Badran, *Feminists, Islam and Nation. Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 93.

686 Čokić, *O teset-turu*, 11; 64–65.

687 Jahjajade, “Savremena emancipacija žene,” *Hikmet* 4, no. 47 (1933): 348.

Among Muslim authors gathered around revivalist journal *El-Hidaje*, the veil was understood as a religious directive based on the Qur'ān, whose fundamental purpose was to ensure women's dignity and Muslim moral behaviour.⁶⁸⁸ *El-Hidaje* discourse about the veil developed out of a larger critique of European emancipation, which they regarded as a violent erasure of gender boundaries and an inevitable precursor to the end of civilization. They identified the infiltration of contemporary European forms of entertainment and fashion trends as the primary reasons why women in Bosnia and Herzegovina were rejecting the face veil. It was suggested that these factors were also responsible for declining marriage rates, a rise in bachelors, infertility, infanticide, and other negative social trends that were spreading in Bosnian society.⁶⁸⁹ In addition, the texts in *El-Hidaje* lamented over the growing impoverishment of Muslims, describing it as another important element leading to the rejection of the veil and spread of prostitution among Muslim women.⁶⁹⁰ In short, the direct contact with the West was blamed for both impoverishment of Muslims and the penetration of modern, anti-Islamic social trends, that is to say for elements recognized as causes of unveiling and moral decline.

6.3.3. Veiling and Identity

The Bosnian debates on veiling on several levels questioned the relationship between Islam and Muslims and others religious and cultural traditions and communities. The issue of the relationship between Bosnian Muslims and Europe in general and particularly between Bosnian Muslims and other ethnic and religious groups in Bosnia and wider Yugoslavian context were deeply embedded in the debates on veiling. In addition, these debates served to question the position of Bosnian Muslims in the wider Muslim world.

• *Bosnian Muslims in the wider European and Yugoslav space*

During the interwar era, the topic of the veil was closely intertwined with the matter of situating Muslims within the broader European and Yugoslav context.

In an article published in 1928 in *Gajret* Husein Brkić (1889–1947) argued in favour of unveiling, addressing broader concerns about foreign perceptions of Bosnian Muslims. This method of argumentation reflects a broader trend among Muslim intellectuals of the time. Nathalie Clayer has shown that also Albanian intellectuals, both secular and religious, who

688 Handžić, "Položaj žene u islamu," 21; Muhammed Sadik, "Profanisanje zara i peče," *El-Hidaje* 4, no. 2 (1940): 44–45.

689 Šaban Hodžić, "Ustezanje od braka," pt. 1, *El-Hidaje* 3, no. 4/5 (1939): 55–56; Šaban Hodžić, "Ustezanje od braka," pt. 2, *El-Hidaje* 3, no. 6/7 (1939): 76–78; Hafiz Trebinjac, "Blud (zina, prostitucija)," *El-Hidaje* 5, no. 8/10 (1942): 216; Busuladžić, "Kult golotinje," 220–225.

690 Busuladžić, "Kult golotinje," 223–224; Muharem Borić, "Za bolju budućnost muslimanke," *El-Hidaje* 4, no. 6 (1941): 154–156.

supported unveiling during the inter-war period often “structured their arguments around the question of perception.”⁶⁹¹

From Brkić’s perspective unveiling was an important element meant to demonstrate to non-Muslims compatibility between true Islamic and modern European values.⁶⁹² It was to show that Bosnian Muslims, although on the periphery of Europe, belonged to the European cultural landscape. The opening of Brkić’s article is crucial to understanding his views on modern Europe and Bosnian Muslims. He begins his article by recalling an encounter with a group of Swedish women teachers traveling through Bosnia and Herzegovina, during which he felt ashamed. He alleged that the Swedish women whom he described as famously the most liberated in Europe, were shocked and terrified to see Bosnian Muslim women shuffling along like mummies, without any voice or autonomy, totally bound to their husbands.⁶⁹³ Contrary to the prevailing Orientalist view, Brkić did not attribute the status of Muslim women in Bosnian society to Islam. Instead, he argued that the enforcement of veiling was a manifestation of a patriarchal mindset that hindered Bosnian Muslims from advancing and reinforced negative stereotypes about Muslims. He criticized Bosnian Muslims for adopting socially harmful practices, including the enjoyment of alcohol, which is clearly forbidden according to Islamic scriptures, while insisting on the continuation of the practice of veiling whose Islamic textual sources are at least controversial.⁶⁹⁴ Brkić’s discourse closely related the Muslim women veil to barbarism, authoritarianism, and the cultural and economic decline of Muslims. It was presented as incompatible with both civilized Europe and true Islam.

The veil was utilized during the interwar period to not only reconsider the position of Bosnian Muslims in the wider European cultural context, but also to reassess the national identity of Bosnian Muslims and their interaction with non-Muslims in Yugoslavia. As already mentioned, there were significant differences among Muslim intellectuals regarding the national identification of Bosnian Muslims during this period. They did not only oscillate between Croat, Serb or Yugoslav national identity, but they often shifted during their lifetime from one category to another.⁶⁹⁵ Despite these differences, Xavier Bougarel has shown that secular educated Muslim intellectuals generally advocated for the unveiling of women as a component of the process of nationalization, which was generally supported as a sign of modernity. They regarded the veil as a barrier to the development of national

691 Nathalie Clayer, “Behind the Veil: The Reform of Islam in Inter-war Albania or the Search for a ‘Modern’ and ‘European’ Islam,” in *Islam in Inter-War Europe*, eds. Nathalie Clayer and Eric Germain. Hurst (London: Hurst, 2008): 143.

692 Brkić, “Naše žensko pitanje,” 72.

693 Brkić, “Naše žensko pitanje,” 72.

694 Brkić, “Naše žensko pitanje,” 72.

695 For more on national identification of Bosnian Muslims see: Mirsad Krijestorac, “Nationalism as a Process for Making the Desired Identity Salient: Bosnian Muslims Become Bosniaks” (PhD diss., Florida International University, 2016); Stijn Vervaet, “Između hrvatstva, srpstva i panislamizma;” Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia Origins, History, Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015).

feelings among Muslims and as a cultural and social barrier between Muslims and non-Muslims in Yugoslavia.⁶⁹⁶

Of special importance in this context are *Gajret's* short written and visual reports from the interwar period about the female beauty contests organized by the eponymous cultural association. Local branches of the *Gajret* cultural association organized cultural and social events that “typically consisted of banquets, concerts, performances by choral societies, theatre plays, dances and tombola’s [sic].”⁶⁹⁷ During 1930s beauty contests became an integral part of these events, with *Gajret* frequently publishing reports on these contests and photographs of the local beauty queens.⁶⁹⁸

In light of recent research that has established a link between beauty contests and notions of social progress, modernity, civilization, and nation, I contend that these *Gajret's* reports on beauty contests offer valuable insights into its broader views on women’s roles and bodies, as well as the place of Muslims within monarchist Yugoslavia.⁶⁹⁹ In these brief reports, little information was provided concerning the rules for the beauty contests or information on the selected local beauty queens. The photographs accompanying these reports, however, clearly demonstrate that *Gajret* advocated not only the abolition of the full-face veil, but also the replacement of traditional dress codes with modern, European-style dress codes.⁷⁰⁰ The visual materials in *Gajret* show Muslim women wearing makeup, bob hairstyles, and modern clothing, without any religious symbols.

Gajret's position about Muslim women’s dress practices cannot be properly understood without taking into account its general anti-Ottoman stance and pro-Serb and pro-regime orientation.⁷⁰¹ *Gajret* promoted modern education of Muslim women, and their stronger inclusion in the salaried work and social life, as well as adoption of modern middle-class manners and clothing practices, as steps that were to bring not only the transformation of the social position of Muslim women, but also the liberation of Bosnian Muslims from the Ottoman heritage and their assimilation into the wider Yugoslav community. As Fabio Giomi puts it *Gajret's* activities aimed to foster “new generations of modern, nationally

696 Bougarel, *Islam and Nationhood in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 45.

697 Troch, “Education and Yugoslav Nationhood in Interwar Yugoslavia,” 163.

698 “U Derventi,” *Gajret* 15, no. 1 (1934): 23; “Velika Gajretova zabava u Travniku,” *Gajret* 14, no. 7/8 (1933): 137; “Veliki Gajretov teferič u Lastvi kod Trebinja,” *Gajret* 19, no. (1938): 235; Giomi, *Making Muslim Women European*, 303.

699 Colleen Ballerino Cohen, Richard Wilk and Beverly Stoeltje, “Introduction,” in *Beauty Queens on the Global Stage: Gender, Contests, and Power*, eds. Colleen Ballerino Cohen, Richard Wilk and Beverly Stoeltje (New York: Routledge, 1996): 1–11.

700 Giomi, *Making Muslim Women European*, 303–306.

701 For more on the *Gajret's* pro-regime and pro-Serb orientation see; Troch, “Education and Yugoslav Nationhood in Interwar Yugoslavia,” 162–163; Mitja Velikonja, *Religious Separation and Political Intolerance in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003), 139.

aware Muslim men and women capable of playing an active role in the emerging Yugoslav middle class.”⁷⁰²



Fig. 3 Portrait of Nufeta Arpadžić
Miss Gajret, 20 February 1932, Mostar
Source: *Gajret* 13, no 4 (1932):58

• *The fear of assimilation*

The beauty contests organized by the *Gajret* association were strongly condemned as a source of immorality and social anarchy by conservative religious scholars.⁷⁰³ Furthermore, they correctly understood that *Gajret* advocated not merely the rejection of the face veil, but also the adoption of modern female attire as part of the wider effort to promote Yugoslav national unification. They held that this effort threatened the cultural and religious distinctiveness of Bosnian Muslims.⁷⁰⁴

702 Giomi, “Muslim, Educated and Well-Dressed: Gajret’s Self-Civilizing Mission in Interwar Yugoslavia,” *European Review of History: Revue européenne d’histoire* 26, no. 1 (2019): 41.

703 Muslim, “Kraljica ljepote,” *Hikmet* 3, no. 27 (1931): 78–85; Ahmed Lutfi Čokić, “Posljedice današnjeg ‘savremenog’ društva,” *Hikmet* 3, no. 34 (1932): 317.

704 Zahirović, “Kuda vodi otkrivanje lica muslimanki,” 47–51; Chameran [Ibrahim Hakki Čokić], “Zar i to,” *Hikmet* 2, no. 14 (1930): 54–63.

Conservatives' emphasis on preserving the outward symbols of Islam as essential elements of their faith, which Muslims must uphold to be considered true believers, can be seen as a strategy to maintain a distinct separation between Muslims and other groups within Yugoslavia. They regarded traditional Muslim clothing for both men and women, such as the face veil and red *fez*, a specific type of Muslim male headgear, as expressions of the faith and cultural symbols of Islam.⁷⁰⁵ They referred to the alleged *ḥadīth* "whosoever imitates a group, he becomes one of them" to proclaim anyone who abandon traditional attire to be unbeliever.⁷⁰⁶ Thus, Ibrahim Hakki Čokić wrote that Islam demands from Muslims not only inner discipline, but also that they bear distinctive external signs of religious belonging, whose main purpose is to accentuate difference between Muslims and non-Muslims. Rejecting external signs of Islam for him was an act of unbelief. He considered those who do not demonstrate their faith through their actions as well as those who renounce the external symbols of Islam as deserters, at least.⁷⁰⁷

The revivalist journal *El-Hidaje* employed a similar line of reasoning, depicting the face veil as a symbol of a unique Muslim identity and a means of resisting the influences of other religions and cultures. Mehmed Handžić, who extensively dealt with the importance of external signs in Islam claimed that external, visible signs of every religion were its constitutive parts and that adoption of external signs of other religions such as celebrations, prayers, fasting or clothing was forbidden to Muslims as it signifies the partial adoption of that religion.⁷⁰⁸ He, similarly to Čokić saw Muslim traditional Muslim hat (*fez*) worn by men and the face veil worn by women to be visible symbols of Islamic faith and Muslim identity.⁷⁰⁹

Handžić and Čokić's writings reveal that the strong resistance to adopting modern European fashion trends and the emphasis on preserving what was considered specific Muslim clothing was not only linked to concerns about moral health but also to the identity of the Muslim community in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Their defence of the face veil as the most visible marker of cultural and religious distinctiveness of Bosnian Muslims demonstrates their deep fear of assimilation and losing their distinct identity in a specific local Bosnian multicultural and multireligious environment. Furthermore, their essentialist position assumes sharp binaries and incompatibility between Islam and other cultural and religious traditions.

705 Ahmed Lutfi Čokić, "Islam nošnja i otkrivanje," pt. 1, *Hikmet* 2, no. 21/22 (1931): 287.

706 Bougarel, "Reis i veo," 84.

707 Čokić, *O teset-turu*, 32; Ibrahim Hakki Čokić, "Zejlutesettur, (ili odgovor g. Bušatliću)," pt. 7, *Hikmet* 1, no. 10/11 (1929): 327.

708 Mehmed Handžić, "Kakvih nas sve ima," *El-Hidaje* 3, no. 4/5 (1939): 64; Mehmed Handžić, "Važnost vanjskih znakova sa šeriatskog gledišta," *El-Hidaje* 3, no. 6/7, (1939): 80–82. See also, Hazim Fazlić, "Modern Muslim Thought in the Balkans: The Writings of Mehmed ef. Handžić in the *El-Hidaje* Periodical in the Context of Discrimination and Genocide," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 35, no. 3 (2015): 444–445.

709 Čokić, *O teset-turu*, 32; Handžić, "Kakvih nas sve ima," 64; Handžić, "Važnost vanjskih znakova sa šeriatskog gledišta," 80–82.

Similarly, an article published in 1940 in *El-Hidaje* criticizing the changes in traditional Muslim women clothing, concludes that it is no longer clear who is Anka, and who is Hanka.⁷¹⁰ This remark vividly reflects deeper concern about the blurring of religious and cultural identities in Bosnia and Hercegovina, where Anka is common Christian name, and Hanka Muslim one. The changes in traditional Muslim women attire were seen as indicative of loss of communal identity and Islamic values.

In these conservative and revivalists' narratives the Muslim women's face veil functioned as a tool of resistance against European modernity and Yugoslavian efforts aimed at national and cultural assimilation of Muslims. It was utilized to emphasize the Muslim "Otherness" in relation to modern European values, as well as other ethnic and religious groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina and royalist Yugoslavia.

The previously mentioned statement, titled *Islamska izborna kurija i Reisove izjave* (The Islamic Electoral Curia and the Reis' Statements) from 1928, also clearly demonstrates that modern debates on Muslim women's veiling were largely concerned with the identity of Bosnian Muslims within the broader Yugoslav landscape. The statement affirmed the reformists' position that wearing the face veil was not a religious obligation for Muslim women, but it clearly opposed adopting modern dress codes for the sake of "fashion, custom or even the wish for unification with our brothers by blood and language."⁷¹¹

Bosnian Muslim debates confirm recent studies that have suggested a strong connection between the Muslim woman veil and identity constructions. In the Bosnian context, the emphasis on preserving traditional dress codes can be attributed to the fact that, as demonstrated by Wolfgang Wagner and others, Muslims in minority settings often use the veil to accentuate their group membership and distinguish themselves from the wider society.⁷¹²

The presented interwar debates among Bosnian Muslims show that the issue of unveiling was an important arena for negotiating collective identity, belonging, and the future of Bosnian Muslims within the monarchist Yugoslavia. The opposing positions presented in these debates reflect divergent yet equally serious attempts to preserve and (re)define the collective identity of Bosnian Muslims within a specific socio-political framework that did not recognize their right to autonomous national articulation.

710 Sadik, "Profanisanje zara i peće," 44–45.

711 Editorial board "Takrir isl. izborne kurije," 81–82. Translation provided by Xavier Bougarel. See: Bougarel, "Farewell to the Ottoman Legacy," 19.

712 Wolfgang Wagner, Ragini Sen, Risa Permanadeli, & Caroline S. Howarth, "The Veil and Muslim Women's Identity: Cultural Pressures and Resistance to Stereotyping," *Culture & Psychology* 18, no. 4 (2012): 521.

The advocacy for unveiling by secular Muslim intellectuals—regardless of their formal identification with either Croatian or Serbian national identity—shows that unveiling was understood as a necessary step toward the development of national sentiments among Muslims and their integration in Yugoslavian kingdom. Yet this raises a crucial question: did such an approach represent a denial of Muslim distinctiveness, or was it the opposite, that is an attempt to define the Muslim community beyond strictly religious frameworks, in a form acceptable within the prevailing political system which excluded Muslims as a distinct national subject?

Articles published in *Gajret* clearly reflect this ambivalence. Its advocacy for unveiling aligned with its broader anti-Ottoman sentiments and with its political positioning within the pro-regime, and pro-Serbian discourse. While such orientation can be interpreted as a denial of the distinctive collective identity of Bosnian Muslims, it can also be understood as a pragmatic survival strategy—a means by which Muslims sought to affirm themselves as equal, nationally conscious, and socially visible citizens of the new state, within a system that did not recognize their national autonomy.

Conversely, conservative and revivalist voices did not simply express resistance to change but insisted on preserving traditional practices and visible markers—such as the veil—as a means of defending collective cohesion and identity-specific distinctiveness. Their stance reflects the fear that rapid integration into national projects, which viewed Muslims solely as Serbs or Croats, could result in the complete erasure of their distinctiveness.

Rather than viewing these positions as mutually exclusive they could be understood as two different strategies for preserving the Muslim community within a political framework that left no room for its autonomous national development. The debate over the veil—and, more broadly, over the role of women in society—thus became a discursive site wherein deeper dilemmas concerning belonging, visibility, and survival were articulated.

• *Reflecting on Bosnian Muslims' Place in Global Islamic Developments*

The topic of veiling served also as an important platform for Bosnian Muslims to express their views on their place within the broader Muslim world, particularly in relation to the Kemalist reforms in Turkey.

The distinctive geographic location of Bosnia and Herzegovina played a role in shaping the particular tone of Bosnian Muslim discussions that occurred on the periphery of both the European cultural space and the Muslim world. Muslim reformists discourses on education frequently drew upon movements and trends from throughout the Muslim world, including those among Indian and Russian Muslims. However, in debates surrounding the veil, a distinct differentiation emerged between central and peripheral Muslim communities along

with general view that the central Muslim lands should be a model for communities on the periphery, such as the Bosnian one. The discourses about veiling demonstrate that Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina considered primarily Arab world to be the heart of Islam.

Reformist oriented religious and secular intellectuals Džemaludin Čaušević, Dževad Sulejmanpašić and Husein Đozo showed an obvious inclination towards the reformist movement in Egypt, specifically in relation to the concepts put forth by Egyptian scholar Muḥammad ‘Abduh. This inclination was undoubtedly linked to global influence of this reformist trend and the fact that some of the most notable scholars who engaged in these debates, such as Džemaludin Čaušević was educated in Egypt during the period when Muḥammad ‘Abduh ideas were gaining popularity.

It is evident from the writings of Džemaludin Čaušević that he considered his own views about veiling of Muslim women to be an extension of Muḥammad ‘Abduh’s efforts aimed at socio-cultural and religious renewal of Muslims. He used various occasions to present himself as a disciple of Muḥammad ‘Abduh with the obvious aim of proving that his own position according to which veiling was not religious precept founded in the Qur’ān, but a cultural practice that impeded Muslim women education and the general progress of Muslims was not just his arbitrary view, but a common reformists’ position.⁷¹³ Likewise, Husein Đozo described Čaušević as a proponent of modern Muslim reformists’ stances on Muslim women’s position in society.⁷¹⁴

Reformists deliberately positioned their call for unveiling within the broader reformist intellectual trend advocating the emancipation of Muslim women from traditional patriarchal practices. This strategy served to legitimize their own views regarding the present and future of the Muslim community in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁷¹⁵

The polemics between Reis-ul-ulema Čaušević and his conservative opponents about veiling illustrate a deep disagreement among Bosnian ‘*ulamā*’ regarding the socio-religious reforms in modern Turkey. While Čaušević generally considered these reforms to be a role model for Bosnian Muslims seeking progress, his opponents regarded them as unequivocally pro-Western and anti-Islamic.⁷¹⁶ The conservative attitudes towards Kemalist social reforms is well illustrated by the fact that the journal *Hikmet* had two informational sections; one entitled “From the Turkish world” and the other “From the Islamic world.” This division clearly shows that *Hikmet*’s editors did not regard modern Turkey to be the part of the Islamic world anymore. On the contrary, it embodied wicked departure

713 “Kongres muslimana intelektualaca održan 6. i 7. septembra, prilikom proslave Gajretove dvadesetpetogodišnjice (nastavak),” *Gajret* 9 (1928): 331; Čaušević, “Odgovor Reis-ul-uleme Džematskom medžlisu,” 12–13.

714 Husejn Đozo, “Da li je problem otkrivanja žene vjerskog ili socijalnog karaktera,” *Novi Behar* 10, no. 6/9 (1936): 79.

715 Karić, “Islamic Thought in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the 20th Century,” 417; Jahić, *Hikmet*, 169.

716 Giomi, “Domesticating Kemalism,” 151–187.

from Islamic values and principles. Ibrahim Hakki Čokić scholarly works demonstrate an antipathy towards the social reforms introduced in modern Turkey during the 1920s, especially those concerning women's rights. His view was that reforms of this nature have a detrimental impact on social morality and order. According to him, the unveiling of Muslim women in Turkey and the subsequent visibility of women in the public sphere and the social mixing of men and women were directly responsible for the spread of bars, nightclubs, and the various social ills.⁷¹⁷ In the opinion of Ibrahim Hakki Čokić, the uncritical adoption of Western cultural norms by Turkey did not provide a suitable model for Bosnian Muslims. Instead, he suggested that modern Japan, which successfully integrated Western technological achievements and its traditional practices and religious beliefs, represents a more suitable model.⁷¹⁸ In an effort to degrade Bosnian Muslim advocates of unveiling who generally viewed and presented the social reforms in Turkey as compatible with Islam, the conservative association between the alleged moral decline and the reforms related to women in modern Turkey played a significant role.⁷¹⁹ The conservative sarcastic remark that Čaušević's call for reinterpretation of Qur'ānic verses related to women's dress was nothing more but an attempt to establish a fifth "Kemalist" *madhhab* in Bosnia and Herzegovina should be also interpreted in this sense.⁷²⁰

6.4 . The Issue of the Authenticity of Veiling and Authority to Define what Constitutes True Islam

Bosnian Muslim debates over veiling were defined by a fundamental disagreement regarding whether this custom is merely part of cultural traditions or an authentic Islamic practice.⁷²¹ In order to understand the differences between Bosnian Muslims regarding the issue of the authenticity of veiling it is necessary to take into account the broader methodological differences between Muslim scholars regarding the place and importance of established scholarship and the right to an independent, rational interpretation of the Islamic textual sources.

Given the fact that the Muslim reformists, both secular and religious educated, advocated publicly the abolition of the face veil as a part of the revitalization of the true Islam, they brought into the focus the issue of representation and authority to speak about Islam,

717 Čokić, *O teset-turu*, 11; Čokić, "Zejluttessettur," pt. 2, 121; Chameran [Ibrahim Hakki Čokić], "Jedan pogled na turske protuislamske reforme," *Hikmet* 1, no. 4 (1929): 116–117.

718 Čokić, *O teset-turu*, 11.

719 See as an example Prohos' criticism of reformist link between socio-cultural progress of Turkey and the emancipation of women, Sejfullah Proho, "Frkai dalla" in *Sarajevski džematski medžlis i Reisove izjave*, ed. Hadži Mujaga Merhemić (Sarajevo: Hrvatska tiskara d.d. 1928), 52–53.

720 "Drugi odgovor Džematskog medžlisa Reis-ul-ulemi," in *Sarajevski džematski medžlis i reisove izjave*, ed. Hadži Mujaga Merhemić (Sarajevo: Hrvatska tiskara d.d. 1928), 37; Proho, "Frkai dalla," 52–53.

721 Kurdić, "Percepcija sunneta," 27; Fikret Karčić, "Stavovi vodstva Islamske zajednice u Jugoslaviji povodom zabrane nošenja zara i feredže," *Analiz GBH* 42, no. 34 (2013): 225.

one of the most contentious issues among Muslims up to these days. The reformists' public advocacy for unveiling triggered a series of responses from conservative members of the '*ulamā*' who saw and presented themselves as the guardians of Islamic doctrine and tradition. Conservative members of the '*ulamā*' class faced challenges not only from secular, educated intellectuals questioning their self-proclaimed role as mediators of Islamic tradition and authentic interpreters of Islamic doctrine, but also from reformist members of the '*ulamā*' class. They denounced conservative views on veiling as contrary to the spirit of the Qur'ān grounding their claim on the two basic points: intellectual sterility and formality of conservative religious officials and a devastating impact of the '*ulamā*'s blind adherence to tradition on all forms of enquiry. As the issue of intellectual qualifications of conservative '*ulamā*' and the relevance of the concept of *taqlīd* was primarily questioned by reformist oriented religious scholars, it is not surprising that the heated polemics regarding the issue of unveiling occurred among religious scholars, who had opposing views regarding not only the role future of Muslims and Islam, but also the Islamic past.⁷²²

In the following sections I will show how the debates on the veil generally served as a medium through which a range of actors confronted their opinions regarding the right to *ijtihād*, the qualifications necessary to interpret Islam, form and issue judgements, as well as regards the role of Islamic religious institutions, and the place of the Islamic traditional scholarship.⁷²³

6.4.1. Reformist Orientation to the Qur'ān

Bosnian Muslim reformers viewed face veiling not as a religious requirement, but as a cultural practice that could therefore be changed.⁷²⁴ This understanding primarily relied on the reinterpretation of Qur'ānic verse 24:31 that states "...tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest, and to display of their adornment (*zīna*) only that which is apparent, and to draw their veils (*khumur*, sing. *khimār*) over their bosoms (*juyūb*, sing. *jayb*), and not to reveal their adornment save to their own husbands or fathers, or husbands' fathers,..." and Qur'ān 33:59, which addresses the Prophet to tell "thy wives and thy daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks (*jalābībihinna*) close round them (when they go abroad). That will be better, so that they may be recognised and not annoyed..."

As the majority of traditionally educated religious scholars in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as elsewhere in Muslim world, were opposed to reformists' call for return to Islamic sources

722 Bougarel, "Reis i veo," 93.

723 Bougarel, "Reis i veo," 70; Senadin Lavić, "Kulturno-obrazovna i prosvjetiteljska djelatnost reisa Mehmeda Džemaludin-ef. Čauševića," *Znakovi vremena* 17, no. 65/66 (2014): 13–25.

724 Begović, *O položaju i dužnostima muslimanke prema islamskoj nauci*, 20–27; Otokar Sykore, "Važne izjave Reis-ul-uleme," *Jugoslavenski list*, December 10, 1927, 3; Abdulah Ajni Bušatlić, "O taseturu i hidžabu," pt. 4, *Novi Behar* 2, no. 5 (1928): 69.

and (re)interpretation of the Qur'ān, the advocates of the face unveiling first needed to legitimize their right to reinterpretation of these verses. Since principle of *ijtihād* traditionally had been confined to matters on which there is no clear and categorical text of the Qur'ān and there is no *ijmā'* it is not surprising that reformists generally accentuated ambiguous character of Qur'ānic verses dealing with Muslim woman's clothing in public and related diversity of opinions among classical exegetes and jurists on the issue.

Reformists' interpretation of the Qur'ānic verses traditionally used to advocate total veiling involves two key elements: a re-examination of the meaning of the Qur'ānic vocabulary related to women's clothing and a contextualization of these verses within the specific socio-cultural milieu in which they were revealed.

When it comes to the Qur'ānic terminology, reformists sought to show that Qur'ānic terms such as *khimār* and *jilbāb* used in verses 24:31 and 33:59 are not specifically defined and that they, contrary to conservative understanding, do not refer unequivocally to face veiling, but to body covering more generally. Reformist scholars such as Džemaludin Čaušević Mehmed Begović and Abdulah Ajni Bušatlić claimed that nowhere in the Qur'ān is face covering mentioned or prescribed. They argued that the absence of any specific mention of the face or the terms *niqāb* and *burqu'* in these Qur'ānic verses indicates that they do not mandate covering the face, but rather prescribe modest conduct in accordance with general Islamic moral principles.⁷²⁵ Čaušević and Begović similarly defined the vague term *jilbāb* mentioned in Qur'ān 33:59 simply as a kind of long, outer garment and the term *khimār* (*pl.khumur*) mentioned in the Qur'ān 24:31 as a short scarf that covers hair, neck and breasts, to argue that these verses do not imply any kind of face covering.⁷²⁶

Ambiguous order directed to women in Qur'ān (24:31) "...to display of their adornment (*zīna*) only that which is apparent (*illā mā zahara minhā*)..." was an important part of Muslim Bosnian discussions on modesty and veiling. As regards the term adornment (*zīna*) Dževad Sulejmanpašić argued that it would be inaccurate to interpret *zīna* as the whole female body, since the same verse explicitly commands women to covers their bosoms. According to him if the entire body were considered *zīna*, this command would be illogical. Furthermore, he freely defined *zīna* as those parts of female body that define person as a female and that arouse sexual desire in men (sexual charms).⁷²⁷ Similarly, Čaušević defined *zīna* as referring to those parts of the body that are naturally hidden.⁷²⁸

725 Begović, *O položaju i dužnostima muslimanke prema islamskoj nauci*, 26; Čaušević, "Drugi odgovor Reis-ul-uleme," 27; Bušatlić, "O teseturu i hidžabu," pt. 4, 69.

726 Begović, *O položaju i dužnostima muslimanke prema islamskoj nauci*, 21–22; Čaušević, "Drugi odgovor Reis-ul-uleme" 27–28.

727 Sulejmanpašić, *Muslimansko žensko pitanje*, 26.

728 Čaušević, "Drugi odgovor Reis-ul-uleme," 27.

The phrase in 24:31, *illā mā zahara minhā*, Sulejmanpašić interpreted as what is customary or normally held to be external. He argued that this Qur'ānic exception applies not only to the face, but also to the neck, hair, and hands. Furthermore, he believed that this Qur'ānic expression may also pertain to other parts of the body that were traditionally exposed in early Muslim community.⁷²⁹ While he refrained from specifying which body parts these might be, stating that his knowledge of the appropriate dress codes of that period was limited, it is evident that Sulejmanpašić regarded the notions of modesty as culturally contingent. The same phrase Čaušević interpreted as the face and the hands; arguing that they were places of external adornments allowed to be displayed.⁷³⁰

Moreover, religious trained Muslim reformists emphasized the diversity of opinions within Islamic tradition in relation to veiling and claimed that even the majority of pre-classical and classical exegetes and jurists interpreted verse 24:31 as to command the covering of the woman's body, apart from face, the hands and the feet.⁷³¹ I contend that reformist emphasis on variety of opinions regarding the issue of veiling within Islamic exegetical and legal tradition served twofold purposes. It was to show that there was no consensus among the accepted authorities from the past on the matter, and that therefore, it was permissible to reinterpret Islamic textual sources in order to solve this issue.⁷³² Additionally, references to past interpretations that allowed women to show their faces were intended to demonstrate that reformist views were not a radical departure from Islamic exegetical and legal traditions.

Advocates of unveiling generally opposed a verse-by-verse interpretation common in traditional exegetical literature and advocated a contextual interpretation of verses often used to justify female face veiling. They claimed that the true meaning of these verses cannot be properly understood without situating them within a specific historical, social, cultural, as well as wider literal context.

Their understanding of the verse 24:31 was based on the widely accepted belief that prior to the revelation of this verse women in Arabian society dressed immodestly, leaving much of their bodies exposed. Dževad Sulejmanpašić, Džemaludin Čaušević, Abdulah Ajni Bušatlić, and Osman Nuri Hadžić claimed that it was common prior to the revelation of this verse to see Arabian women wearing a headscarf that flowed loosely around their shoulders, leaving their upper chest exposed. According to them this verse was intended to encourage these women to dress decently and in accordance with new Islamic moral standards. Thus,

729 Sulejmanpašić, *Muslimansko žensko pitanje*, 26–27.

730 Čaušević, "Drugi odgovor Reis-ul-uleme," 27.

731 Čaušević, "Odgovor Reis-ul-uleme," 12–13; Bušatlić, "O teseturu i hidžabu," pt. 4, 69–70; Abdulah Ajni Bušatlić, "O teseturu i hidžabu," pt. 5, *Novi Behar* 2, no. 6 (1928): 88.

732 Čaušević, "Odgovor Reis-ul-uleme," 12–13.

they argued that this verse was revealed to correct the then-prevailing customs and that it prescribed chastity and morality and not the specific type of covering.⁷³³

Čaušević's interpretation of this verse was in line with his general position that the particular verse must be interpreted in conjunction with its preceding and following verses, as well as with the Qur'ān as a whole. He openly blamed advocates of the face veil for failing to read Qur'ān 24:31 in connection with the preceding verse 24:30 that commands Muslim males "to lower their gaze and to guard their modesty."⁷³⁴ The conservative interpretation of verse 24:31 as ordering segregation and full covering of women according to Čaušević contradicts the fundamental message of the Qur'ān regarding the equality of men and women in terms of moral responsibility. He argued that interpreting this verse out of the context of its revelation had led to a flawed understanding, one that places the primary responsibility for upholding Islamic moral values on women and overemphasizes the moral significance of their clothing. Furthermore, he argued that the reading of Qur'ān 24:31 in connection to 24:30 unquestionably indicates that God places the moral burden on both men and women equally and holds them accountable for the collective morality. Thus, he concludes that it was not a piece of clothing, but moral character of men and women that the Qur'ān exhorted as the most significant means of preserving public morality.⁷³⁵

Regarding Qur'ān 33:59, Mehmed Begović argued that it was essential to place the verse within the specific historical and cultural context in which it was revealed. Only then, according to him, it is it possible to understand that the *jilbāb* mentioned in this verse was not intended to conceal Muslim women but rather to serve as a form of their protection. Begović emphasized that this verse was revealed to address specific problem at the time of revelation. Specifically, it was revealed five years after the Prophet migrated to Medina, where Muslim women were often being harassed by hypocrites who claimed to have mistaken them for slaves, which were considered to be fair game for sexual assaults.⁷³⁶ The context of this verse according to Begović suggests that its purpose was not to mandate the complete covering and segregation of Muslim women, but rather to instruct them to use a long outer garment (shawl) to cover their bodies, thereby identifying themselves as free, chaste Muslim women. Begović, claimed that the Qur'ān 33:59 when put within its proper revelational context, clearly demonstrates that *jilbāb* was prescribed primary as a marker of distinction between free Muslim women and slaves in a society where slave women were considered to be sexually available, and thus as a specific form of recognition of Muslim women.⁷³⁷

733 Sulejmanpašić, *Muslimansko žensko pitanje*, 25–26; Hadžić, "Žensko pitanje u islamu," pt. 5, 369–370, Čaušević, "Drugi odgovor Reis-ul-uleme," 27; Bušatlić, "O teseturu i hidžabu," pt. 4, 69–70.

734 Čaušević, "Drugi odgovor Reis-ul-uleme," 27.

735 Čaušević, "Drugi odgovor Reis-ul-uleme," 27.

736 Begović, *O položaju i dužnostima muslimanke prema islamskoj nauci*, 21.

737 Begović, *O položaju i dužnostima muslimanke prema islamskoj nauci*, 21–22.

Čaušević's interpretation of the Qur'ān (33:59) reveals a typical reformist distinction between the true Islamic message contained in the Qur'ān and its later interpretations. He claimed that this Qur'ānic verse simply commands Muslim women to draw upon themselves their outer garment (*jilbāb*) to cover their chests, while some of its later interpreters required covering of the whole woman's body including the face by claiming that *jilbāb* mentioned in this verse should be held in hands in such a way so that only one eye can be exposed.⁷³⁸ Čaušević's distinction between the Qur'ānic text and its later interpretation served, as in reformist discourse in general, to prove that some Muslim commentators inaccurately translated God's clear command of modest apparel into a requirement for Muslim women to cover their faces.⁷³⁹ The distinction between the true Islamic message contained in the Qur'ān and the historical interpretation of that message was in line with his critical attitudes towards passive acceptance of dogmas from religious authorities.

6.4.2. The Early Islamic History and the Issue of Foreign Influences

Not only Islamic religious texts, but also the early Islamic history was employed and interpreted to claim that the face veil was rooted in foreign cultural traditions rather than mandated by religious doctrine.

Osman Nuri Hadžić drew on the portrayal of free and powerful Muslim women that played an important role in the formation of the first Muslim community, which was a common theme in reformist literature, to argue that women in the Golden Age of Islam were not completely veiled or secluded. Based on this premise, he contended that the face veil cannot be considered an authentic Islamic religious obligation.⁷⁴⁰ In Hadžić's discourse, the early Islamic community was depicted as a manifestation of the fundamental Islamic principle of equality between men and women which was subsequently compromised under the influence of foreign cultures. Hadžić viewed the Muslim woman's face veil as the most visible sign of Muslims' departure from the true and authentic Islamic message and their adoption of foreign patriarchal customs.⁷⁴¹

The issue of foreign influences on Islamic religious and cultural tradition was a significant aspect of the various intra-Muslim debates in Bosnia and Herzegovina concerning the authenticity of veiling. Those who opposed veiling claimed veil's foreign provenance to support their position that it is not an authentic Islamic duty or specific sign of cultural and religious distinctiveness. Conversely, proponents of veiling viewed the unveiling as a direct result of modern Western European culture and rejected it as an attempt at Westernization. This is certainly not a peculiarity of Bosnian Muslim discourses. Asma Afsaruddin has shown

738 Čaušević, "Drugi odgovor Reis-ul-uleme," 28.

739 Čaušević, "Drugi odgovor Reis-ul-uleme," 28.

740 Hadžić, "Žensko pitanje u islamu," pt. 5, 369–370.

741 Hadžić, "Žensko pitanje u islamu," pt. 1, 259.

that both, veiling and unveiling, have been in various discussions from 19th century onward regularly attributed to foreign influence.⁷⁴²

Muslim reformists from Bosnia and Herzegovina similarly to their counterparts in the wider Muslim world understood and presented practices of veiling and seclusion not as original Islamic practices, but as a legacy of Byzantine, Persian, and Jewish, with which Muslims in the early centuries came into the contact.⁷⁴³ Their interest in the origin of veiling certainly was not a purely historical; references to foreign origin of this practice were intended to serve as a proof that it was not an Islamic religious duty, but indeed non-Islamic historical accretion. Authors such as Mehmed Begović and Osman Nuri Hadžić argued that veiling and seclusion over the centuries became associated with Islam not only because Muslims adopted these practices, but mostly due to the fact that later religious authorities interpreted the Qur'ānic verses on modesty through the lens of foreign traditions.⁷⁴⁴

It is clear that from in the perspective of these authors veiling was not regarded as an Islamic obligation or a specific manifestation of Muslim identity as seen in conservative discourses, nor as a symbol of Islam's oppressive and barbaric nature, as in Orientalists' critiques of veiling. Instead, it was understood as a result of historical deviations from Islam and as a sign of departure from authentic Islamic principles and practices. Consequently, reform of the veiling and seclusion practices was framed as a renewal of Qur'ānic teachings and not as an abandonment of Islam.

Mustafa Čelić (1893–1940) claimed that the practice of veiling was not exclusive to Bosnian Muslims and could also be found among Jews and Catholics in Western Bosnia, as well as to some extent in Dalmatia. He did so to demonstrate that veiling was not a unique or authentic Islamic tradition, but rather a custom with diverse cultural origins.⁷⁴⁵ In addition for the same author the wide variety of Muslim women's clothing in different countries was a proof that local customs and cultural practices influenced the understanding of Muslim women's appropriate dress.⁷⁴⁶

742 Asma Afsaruddin, "Introduction: The Hermeneutics of Gendered Space and Discourse," in *Hermeneutics and Honor: Negotiating Female "Public" Space in Islamic/ate*, eds. Asma Afsaruddin and Anan Ameri (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999): 7.

743 Begović, *O položaju i dužnostima muslimanke prema islamskoj nauci*, 23–25; Osman Nuri Hadžić, "Žensko pitanje u islamu," pt. 4, *Gajret* 9, no. 22/23 (1925): 345; Hadžić, "Žensko pitanje u islamu," pt. 5, 369–370.

744 Begović, *O položaju i dužnostima muslimanke prema islamskoj nauci*, 23–25; Osman Nuri Hadžić, "Žensko pitanje u islamu," pt. 5, 369–370.

745 Mustafa Čelić, "Život i društveni položaj muslimanske žene," pt. 2, *Novi Behar*, 1, no. 7 (1927): 101.

746 Čelić, "Život i društveni položaj muslimanske žene," pt. 2, 101.

6.4.3. Reformist Critique of Conservative Bosnian *'Ulamā'*: Debating Intellectual and Religious Authority

Muslims advocates of unveiling were aware that the issue of unveiling was considered to be in the exclusive domain of religious scholars. Consequently, they recognized that their advocacy for unveiling was likely to encounter resistance from conservative members of the *'ulamā'* class and the broader population. This is clearly evident in the introductory chapter of Dževad Sulejmanpašić's book *Muslimansko žensko pitanje* in which he apologizes for discussing as a young man such an important issue as veiling. In his apology, while anticipating possible disdain from his fellow Muslims, he indicates that he felt it was his duty to inform them on the topic.⁷⁴⁷ This demonstrates his awareness of both the significance and the controversial nature of the topic.

During a preparatory meeting held in 1927 for the congress of Muslim intellectuals, which was scheduled for September 1928, participants clearly expressed concerns that discussing the issue of veiling—traditionally seen as the exclusive domain of religious scholars—could lead to condemnation from conservative members of the *'ulamā'*. Replying to these concerns, Reis-ul-ulema Džemaludin Čaušević argued that it was not only permissible, but also necessary to involve secular educated Muslim intellectuals in discussions on the key socio-cultural issues confronting Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to pave the way for their progress.⁷⁴⁸ Although a member of *'ulamā'* class, he encouraged secular educated Muslims to work on the enlightenment of Bosnian Muslims and defended their right to participate in socio-religious and cultural debates arguing that it was their duty to work on the welfare of their community. The same position towards the secular intellectuals was expressed also by other reform-oriented religious scholars such as Husein Đozo (1912–1982).⁷⁴⁹

The discussions on veiling are of the great importance as they witness the fragmentation within the class of religious scholars, who had divergent views not only on this particular issue, but on the cultural and religious authority in general. Religious reform-oriented Muslim intellectuals, as well as secular educated reformists, seriously questioned the traditional notion of *'ulamā'* as the exclusive repository of Islamic knowledge. Members of both groups criticized conservative members of *'ulamā'* class in Bosnia and Herzegovina as incompetent to provide new, fresh, and yet Islamic solutions to problems facing Muslim women, and the Muslim community in general. They claimed that *'ulamā's* poor secular education and the consequent lack of understanding of modern social processes disabled them to detect the burning issues the community was facing. In addition, their knowledge about Islam was depicted as formalistic and rigid and as such insufficient to provide true

⁷⁴⁷ Sulejmanpašić, *Muslimansko žensko pitanje*, 6.

⁷⁴⁸ Gajret, "Konferencija muslimanske inteligencije u Gajretu," *Gajret* 11, no. 24 (1927): 384.

⁷⁴⁹ Đozo, "Da li je problem otkrivanja žene vjerskog ili socijalnog karaktera," 78–80.

Islamic solution to these problems. Their lack of knowledge, both secular and the religious one was generally stressed as responsible for the existing social order that was depicted as un-just and un-Islamic.⁷⁵⁰

Muslim reformist intellectual Dževad Sulejmanpašić presented the conservative members of *'ulamā'* as a closed and incapacitated individuals, hampered by their outdated education and inability to comprehend the long-term social, economic, and moral consequences of isolating Muslim women. Sulejmanpašić interpreted the fear of female emancipation and unveiling among the *'ulamā'* as a direct result of their limited general education and formalistic knowledge of Islam.⁷⁵¹

The religious expertise of the conservative Bosnian *'ulamā'* was particularly questioned by the reformist's members of *'ulamā'* class. The conservatives were criticized for their intellectual and spiritual poverty, which was considered as the primary cause of irrationalism, religious pedantry, fatalism and obscurantism among Bosnian Muslims.⁷⁵² Religious educated reformists scholars such as Abdulah Ajni Bušatlić and Husein Đozo openly attacked what Đozo termed "*taqlīd* mentality" of Bosnian *'ulamā's*, holding the blind adherence to the past authorities to be the major factor hindering the development of Islam and Muslims.⁷⁵³ For these scholars it was a poor religious education of conservative *'ulamā'* that was to be blamed for the failure to reflect critically upon the inherited exegetical and legal tradition and thus to distinguish between historical Islam, that was formed under the influence of different cultures and local traditions, and the true Islamic principles contained in its textual foundations. The conservative understanding of veiling as a religious duty was criticized as being based on a false and dangerous sacralization of historically and culturally determined understandings of the eternal Islamic principles of modesty. These reformist scholars blamed the uncritical acceptance of classical exegetical works as the ultimate authority on the issue of veiling for undermining the supreme authority of the textual sources of Islam, ossifying Islamic tradition and falsely attributing religious significance to a primarily socio-cultural issue. Moreover, they saw it as ultimately leading to a prohibition of critical discourses on the issue, which the *'ulamā'* monopolized.⁷⁵⁴

The reformist critique of conservative defence of the face veil as a product of blind traditionalism challenged the very foundations of the *'ulamā's* interpretative authority. It

750 Bougarel, "Reis i veo," 91.

751 Jahić, "Modernizam Dževada Sulejmanpašića," 136.

752 Abdulah Ajni Bušatlić, *Pitanje muslimanskog napretka u Bosni i Hercegovini (Iskrena i otvorena riječ)* (Islamska dionička štamparija, Sarajevo, 1928), 8.

753 Abdulah Ajni Bušatlić, "O teseturu i hidžabu," pt. 2, *Novi Behar* 2, no. 3 (1928): 37–38; Abdulah Ajni Bušatlić, "O teseturu i hidžabu," pt. 3, *Novi Behar* 2, no. 4 (1928): 57–58; Đozo, "Da li je problem otkrivanja žene vjerskog ili socijalnog karaktera," 78–79.

754 Bušatlić, "O teseturu i hidžabu," pt. 2, 38; Bušatlić, "O teseturu i hidžabu," pt. 3, 57; Đozo, "Da li je problem otkrivanja žene vjerskog ili socijalnog karaktera," 78–79.

discredited both; the traditional training of Islamic religious scholars and the concept of *taqlīd*. For religious reformist the desired revitalization of authentic Islam, was not possible without reforms of established institutions and the system of education of '*ulamā*' class.

The critique of *taqlīd* and the focus on the text of the Qur'ān among the reformists were closely intertwined with their understanding of Islam as a religion that does not recognize intermediary between God and humankind. For Džemaludin Čaušević Islam was a free, personal submission of one's will to God's dictates as defined in the Qur'ān, rather than blind acceptance of the dogmas of religious authorities.⁷⁵⁵ Even though Čaušević, prominent member of the class of religious scholars, appreciated Islamic tradition he strongly insisted on the differentiation between Islamic sources and their later interpretations, which he saw only as a human, fallible attempts to understand these sources and as such open to criticism and questioning.⁷⁵⁶ To legitimize the revival of *ijtihād* Čaušević, as Muslim reformists elsewhere, claimed that even great founders of the legal schools did not considered their positions to be indisputable and final.⁷⁵⁷ His intensive debate with the *Džematski medžlis* (local religious assembly) from Sarajevo reveals a specific reformists' method used to establish legitimacy for their own views. When the *Džematski medžlis* accused Čaušević of neglecting and exploiting Islamic intellectual tradition and thus for unbelief he tried to gain authority for his views by establishing links not primarily to past authorities, but to wider Islamic reformist movement. He argued that he was instructed by his respected teacher Muḥammad 'Abduh to go straight to the sources of religion, primarily Qur'ān, to find solution for current problems facing Muslims and not to follow blindly opinions of the past authorities.⁷⁵⁸ His attitude towards Islamic intellectual heritage illustrates well the following response addressed to his critics that charged him with unbelief: "although I am familiar with what *sharī'a* jurists and commentators have said, I prefer to abide by the prescriptions of the Qur'ān, because it is eternal and for all times. This is what the Qur'ān itself prescribes for me, since it prescribes reflection, study and research. In this regard I do not need your authorization, and therefore it is needless to gainsay me what God Almighty has called upon me to do."⁷⁵⁹

A similar understanding of Islam is evident in the work of Muslim reformist scholar Abdulah Ajni Bušatlić (1871–1946), who publicly supported Čaušević's statements. Bušatlić defended Čaušević's right to express publicly his views on veiling by stating that every individual is personally responsible to God and should take responsibility for his/her actions. He explained that Čaušević nowhere order Muslim women to unveil, but only

755 Zeki, "Za što islamski narodi ne napreduju," 26–27. Faik Zeki, according to Enes Karić was pen name of Džemaludin Čaušević. See: Karić, "Islamic Thought in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the 20th Century," 409.

756 Čaušević "Drugi odgovor Reis-ul-uleme," 24–25.

757 Čaušević, "Drugi odgovor Reis-ul-uleme" 25.

758 Džemaludin Čaušević, "Odgovor Reis-ul-uleme Džematskom medžlisu," in *Sarajevski džematski medžlis i Reisove izjave*, ed. Hadži Mujaga Merhemić (Sarajevo: Hrvatska tiskara d.d. 1928), 12–13.

759 Čaušević, "Drugi odgovor Reis-ul-uleme," 25.

informed Muslims what is according to Islam permissible and that therefore he did not in any way exceed the scope of his authority.⁷⁶⁰ The following excerpt from Bušatlić book demonstrates his understanding of Islam and his attitudes towards Islamic tradition: „it is a characteristic of Islamic faith that each one of us is responsible for himself in every regard. There is absolutely no intermediary between God and man in Islamic teachings, and our entire life must be founded upon normal work and conduct.”⁷⁶¹

6.4.4. Authenticity and Authority in Conservative Perspective

Since the issue of veiling was raised in public sphere by reformists circles as a part of the larger call for a return to the foundations of Islam, primarily Qur’ān, it is not surprising that conservative discourses on veiling primarily challenged the legitimacy of that request. Conservative responses to reformists discourses on veiling can be reduced to two basic elements.

First, conservative circles, aware of the importance of the textual sources in reformist thought strove to show that foundational texts of Islam, primarily Qur’ān, clearly command Muslim women to cover their bodies entirely and that the full-face veil is therefore a religious ruling that cannot be an object of *ijtihād*.⁷⁶² Second, they denied the right of reformists authors, both secular and religious educated, to discuss this issue publicly holding it to be a religious issue to be discussed only within established Islamic institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and within boundaries set by classical legal and exegetical authorities. Reformists’ focus on the Qur’ān was criticized as a sign of the complete rejection of Islamic dogmas and recognized authorities. On this assumption they based their criticism of reformists as outcasts from Islam.

• *Veiling as a religious duty*

Regarding the textual foundations of Islam, conservatives placed emphasis on verses 24:31, 33:59, and 24:60, which they unanimously interpreted as an unambiguous directive to women to fully cover their bodies, including their faces, feet, and hands.

Ibrahim Hakki Čokić wrote in his book titled *O teset-turu* that the Qur’ān 24:31 contains a clear directive to women to lower their head coverings over their faces and bodies. Arabic term *khimār* Čokić translates into Bosnian as *jašmak* and *peča*; explaining additionally that *khimār* was at the time of revelation already known type of cloth used to cover the head and face.⁷⁶³

760 Bušatlić, *Pitanje muslimanskog napretka u Bosni i Hercegovini*, 18.

761 Bušatlić, *Pitanje muslimanskog napretka u Bosni i Hercegovini*, 18.

762 Čokić, “Islam nošnja i otkrivanje,” pt. 1, 284–285.

763 Čokić, *O teset-turu* 32.

Conservative interpretations of this verse largely cantered around the order directed to women to display of their adornment (*zīna*) *only that which is apparent* (*illā mā ṣāhara minhā*) as generally reformist authors generally cited the ambiguous phrase *illā mā ṣāhara minhā* as a justification for women to uncover their faces, feet, and hands.

Muslim scholar Ali Riza Karabeg (1872–1944.) argued that this phrase can mean only “what is accidentally exposed.”⁷⁶⁴ He, as well as Ibrahim Hakki Čokić, argued that the meaning of this phrase mentioned in the Qur’ān (24:31) may seem unclear only when this verse is interpreted in isolation from other Qur’ān verses dealing with the same issues, which according to them mandated the full covering of women in order to completely eliminate the pre-Islamic practice of indecent body exposure.⁷⁶⁵

Ibrahim Hakki Čokić interpreted this phrase in accordance with his view according to which the entire woman’s body is *zīna* (adornment) and as such a subject of veiling. Čokić reduced apparent adornment allowed to be displayed to woman’s outer clothing; that is to the face veil and cloak (*peča* and *zar*) since, as he wrote, these will be always visible in public.⁷⁶⁶ He based his argumentation upon a distinction between *awra* and *zīna*, to argue that the Qur’ān 24:31 does not order women to cover only their intimate parts (*awra*) decently as these parts are to be covered even in the presence of male family members. Rather, the verse was understood as demanding the covering of a woman’s beauty (*zīna*) in general.⁷⁶⁷ According to his interpretation natural and artificial beauty, as well as woman’s regular clothing was a kind of hidden *zīna*, to be decently covered.⁷⁶⁸ Čokić, as well as Karabeg, contended that since the face is considered one of the most alluring and captivating features of female body, the complete covering of the face aligns with the Qur’ānic directive that women should conceal their *zīna* (adornment).⁷⁶⁹

Conservatives severely criticized reformists for claiming that even the majority of historical legal and exegetical authorities interpreted Qur’ānic verse 24:31 as allowing women to uncover their faces, hands, and feet. They argued that this reformist claim was based on a serious methodological flaw: the inability to make a clear distinction between general rules and exceptions. Conservative scholars warned that classical juridical and exegetical authorities allowed certain parts of female body such as face, feet and hands to be uncovered under genuine needs such as the identification, appearing before the judge

764 Ali Riza Karabeg, *Rasprava o hidžabu (krivenju muslimanki)*, (Mostar: Hrvatska tiskara F.P., 1928), 14.

765 Karabeg, *Rasprava o hidžabu*, 1–6; Ibrahim Hakki Čokić *Zejluttesettur* ili odgovor g. Bušatliću, pt. 6, *Hikmet* 1, no. 8/9 (1929): 269.

766 Čokić, *O taset-turu*, 26–29.

767 Čokić, *O taset-turu*, 17–19.

768 Čokić, *O taset-turu*, 18–20; Ibrahim Hakki Čokić, “*Zejluttesettur*,” pt. 5, *Hikmet* 1, no. 7 (1929): 215; Čokić, “*Zejluttesettur*,” pt. 6, 268.

769 Karabeg, *Rasprava o hidžabu*, 28; Čokić, *O tase-turu*, 32; Čokić, *Zejluttesettur*, pt. 5, 215; Čokić, “*Zejluttesettur*,” pt. 6, 268.

for witness, performing hard agricultural or commercial activities, and that therefore uncovering of the face and palms is a kind of exemption that cannot be generalized. Reformists claim was seen and criticized in conservative circles as a kind of manipulation of Islamic religious heritage to incorrectly transform an exception into a general rule.⁷⁷⁰

As regards the Qur'ān (33:58–59), conservative opponents of unveiling contrary to reformists authors who focused on the rationale behind this verse focused on the type of dress that this verse according to them orders. Čokić translated the term *jilbāb* as *feredža*, *ogrtač*, *zar*, *čemeber*, *plašt* explaining that it is actually a kind of cloak used to cover the head and upper part of the body.⁷⁷¹ Karabeg argued that early commentators such as Ibn Abbās understood this verse as mandating the full covering of woman's body, including her face.⁷⁷²

The specific characteristic of conservative defence of the face veil is a heavy reliance on the *ḥadīth* material. Various *ḥadīths* of questionable authenticity have been used to justify the interpretation of Qur'ānic verses about women's clothing as a mandate for covering the entire body.⁷⁷³

Apart from the reliance on *ḥadīth* material, conservative discourses characterize focus on the Qur'ān 24:60 that Čokić translates in the following manner: "As for women who are past their youth and who have no hope of marriage (and have no wish for marriage), it is no sin for them if they cast off their outer clothing (*feredža*, *zar* etc.) if they do not adorn themselves. But to refrain is better for them..."⁷⁷⁴ This verse, interpreted as a kind of permission given to elderly women to take off their outer garment (*feredža*, *zar*, etc) and thus to uncover their hands, face, and feet in the presence of men, was presented as an exception that confirms general rule that young women were obliged to keep their body fully covered.⁷⁷⁵

Significant differences within the circle of Bosnian religious scholars regarding the authenticity of the veiling clearly shows that, as Marilyn Robinson Waldman points out, Muslims, like members of other religious traditions, have not developed an unambiguous interpretation of the fundamental religious scriptures, or a unanimous view on how to interpret "their own normative sources."⁷⁷⁶ As we have seen the same normative sources

770 Karabeg, *Rasprava o hidžabu*, 14–15; Čokić, *O teset-turu*, 21–26; Čokić, "Zejluttesettur," pt. 6, 269–273.

771 Čokić, *O teset-turu*, 14.

772 Karabeg, *Rasprava o hidžabu*, 2.

773 Čokić, *O teset-turu*, 15–17; Karabeg, *Rasprava o hidžabu*, 2–3.

774 Čokić, *O teset-turu*, 14.

775 Čokić, *O teset-turu*, 14, 20.

776 Marilyn Robinson Waldman, "Reflections on Islamic Tradition, Women and Family," in *Muslim Families in North America*, eds. Earle H. Waugh, Sharon McIrvn Abu-Laban and Regula Burckhardt Qureshi (Edmonton: The University Alberta Press, 1991), 316. See also: Thomas Bauer, Hinrich Biesterfeldt, and Tricia Tunstall, *A Culture of Ambiguity: An Alternative History of Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021), 30–73.

were invoked to support and to challenge the notion that wearing a face veil is an Islamic obligation. The Bosnian Muslim debates on veiling support Sofie Roald's argument that "although something is written down, the written text does not always influence practice in actuality or as debated among various factions of Muslims. At the end of the day, it is the function of the text or how this particular text is perceived, which counts."⁷⁷⁷

The extensive use of Islamic sources in Muslim debates on veiling should be viewed not only in the light of the religious importance that these sources have for Muslims, but also in the light of their significance for the cultural identity of Muslims. As Nikki R. Keddie points out these sources have played an important role in defining Muslim identity, especially in relation to the West.⁷⁷⁸ Essentially, these debates are influenced by both the religious significance of the Islamic foundational texts and their role in maintaining a distinct cultural identity in the face of Western influence.

• *Defence of traditional authority*

In addition to arguing that the veiling of Muslim women's faces is rooted in the foundational texts of Islam and, as such, cannot be subject to (re)interpretation, the conservatives sought to reaffirm their position of exclusive guardians of Islamic knowledge.

It is not surprising that the main debate on veiling was held between religious educated scholars, particularly between Reis-ul-ulema Čaušević and his opponents, as reformist invocation of the principle of *ijtihād*, condemnation of *taqlīd* mentality of conservative scholars and reformists' generally negative view of traditional religious education of Bosnian '*ulamā*', called into the question the traditional notion of religious authority. Public discussions on the issue that started with Čaušević's public lecture in 1927 and his public statements in media were harshly condemned by conservative scholars as an irresponsible act that would encourage people with no required religious qualifications to discuss publicly socio-religious issues that were traditionally understood to be within the exclusive domain of the traditionally educated Islamic scholars and the established Islamic institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁷⁷⁹ Conservative negative stance towards public discussions on the issue of veiling rested on their accurate observation that these discussions could lead to the democratization of the religious sphere in the sense of the emergence of new voices claiming authority to interpret religious truths.

⁷⁷⁷ Roald, *Women in Islam*, xii.

⁷⁷⁸ Keddie, *Women in the Middle East: Past and Present*, 216.

⁷⁷⁹ H. M. Merhemić "Pismo Džematskog medžlisa Reis-ul-ulemi," in *Sarajevski džematski medžlis i Reisove izjave*, ed. Hadži Mujaga Merhemić (Sarajevo: Hrvatska tiskara d.d. 1928), 9; H. M. Merhemić, "Odgovor Džematskog medžlisa Reis-ul-ulemi," *Sarajevski džematski medžlis i Reisove izjave*, ed. Hadži Mujaga Merhemić (Sarajevo: Hrvatska tiskara d.d. 1928), 17.

The close reading of the previously mentioned statement of the *Islamic Electoral Curia* from 1928 clearly demonstrate that the issue of authority was an essential part of the debates on veiling. This statement that principally allowed women to unveil their faces under certain circumstances, harshly condemned public discussion on the issue considering them to threaten the integrity of Muslim community.⁷⁸⁰ The statement's ambiguity indicates that the *Islamic electoral curia* aimed to ease tensions among the '*ulamā*' without compromising traditional view of religious authority.

Conservative discourses on veiling characterizes sharp division between what they considered true, traditional authority and the flawed authority of reformist, whether members of the class of '*ulamā*' or secular educated intellectuals. Their criticism of reformists' call for a return to the Islamic textual sources was based on two main elements: the defence of traditional Islamic thought and the related principle of *taqlīd* as a religious requirement, and the claimed reformists' lack of the recognized qualifications to exercise *ijtihād*.

Islamic conservative scholars such as Ali Riza Karabeg, Ibrahim Hakki Čokić and Sejfullah Proho argued that reformist positions on veiling were just a mere, arbitrary opinions which stood in opposition to the long and recognized Islamic exegetical and juridical tradition.⁷⁸¹ Reformists' focus on the Qur'ān was primarily perceived as a dismissal of other Islamic sources and a rejection of the Islamic tradition, which was believed to lead to anarchy among Muslims.⁷⁸² Ali Riza Karabeg openly accused Reis-ul-ulema Čaušević and reformist in general for rejecting religious dogmas and for trying to create *fitna* in Muslim community. He, as well as Čokić and Sejfullah Proho, argued that reformists' extensive reliance on the Qur'ān denied the validity of other foundations of Islam which in turns leads to collapse of Islam.⁷⁸³ Reformist were also criticized for their selective use of classical authorities and their references to Islamic exegetical tradition were seen as a mere rhetorical strategy used to attain legitimacy for their arbitrary views.⁷⁸⁴

Džematski medžlis (local religious assembly) from Sarajevo harshly accused Reis-ul-ulema Čaušević of interpreting Qur'ān according to his own arbitrary understanding, with little regard for Islamic exegetical and legal tradition and for an attempt to impose his own unjustified opinion upon others.⁷⁸⁵ This according to *Džematski medžlis* contravened "the understanding of all *mujtahids* [religious scholars], who do not accept the isolated *ijtihād*

780 Editorial board "Takrir isl. izborne kurije," 81–82.

781 Karabeg, *Rasprava o hidžabu*, 11–14, 23, 30; Proho, "Frkai dalla," 50; Čokić, *O teset-turu*, 12.

782 Čokić, "Zejluttesettur" pt. 2, 122.

783 Karabeg, *Rasprava o hidžabu*, 8–9; Proho, "Frkai dalla" 50; Čokić, *O teset-turu*, 13.

784 Proho, "Frkai dalla," 53.

785 "Drugi odgovor Džematskog medžlisa Reis-ul-ulemi," 36.

[interpretation] of even much greater authorities [preferring to rely on *ijmā'*, the consensus of authorities]."⁷⁸⁶

Conservative descriptions of reformist positions regarding the veiling of Muslim women as subjective, arbitrary opinions demonstrate specific conservative understanding of religious-cultural authority. For conservative religious scholars, religious-cultural authority did not rest on the knowledge of Islamic foundational texts, a critical approach to tradition, or an understanding of the modern world, as reformists claimed. Instead, it was based on knowledge of and adherence to the Islamic religious-legal tradition—qualifications that they claimed to possess. This connection with the religious-cultural tradition, primarily gained through the traditional education system, was understood as a prerequisite to speak for Islam.⁷⁸⁷ Karabeg saw even traditionally educated reformists, such as Čaušević, as innovators, who cannot be regarded not only as members of '*ulamā'*', but also as members of Muslim community.⁷⁸⁸ For him only conservative religious scholars were repositories of true knowledge of Islam.⁷⁸⁹ He regarded reformists authors as "self-proclaimed progressives," who arbitrarily adapt Islamic principles to modern materialistic worldview. Any interference of secular intellectuals in matters that were considered to be religious was considered by conservative scholars an erroneous path leading to laxity in performing religious duties and anarchy.⁷⁹⁰

Conservative criticism of the reformist advocacy for independent reinterpretation of the foundational texts of Islam aimed to highlight not only that the reformists were rejecting the entire body of Islamic scholarship, but also that they lacked the necessary qualifications to exercise *ijtihād*.

Conservatives not only denied Čaušević, but also other religious scholars of that time, the right to practice *ijtihād* arguing that modern scholars lacked the qualifications and skills required for exercising independent reasoning.⁷⁹¹ Ali Riza Karabeg's argued that in the first centuries of Islam all possible interpretations of the textual sources of Islam were exhausted and that after that period activity of religious scholars was solely restricted to the application and explication of the doctrines of the recognized authorities and schools of law.⁷⁹² While, he did not deny that among existing scholars might arise someone in the rank of *mujtahid*, he held that the right to *ijtihād* was restricted to Arabs, as one of the

786 "Odgovor Džematskog medžlisa Reis-ul-ulemi," 18–19. Translation according to Džemaludin Čaušević, "Letter and Response" in *Modernist Islam 1840–1940*, ed. Charles Kurzman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 199.

787 Lutfi A Čokić, *Prikaz i ocjena rada g. Dr. Mehmeda Begovića*, 3–4.

788 Karabeg, *Rasprava o hidžabu*, 27–30.

789 Karabeg, *Rasprava o hidžabu*, 8.

790 Karabeg, *Rasprava o hidžabu*, 26.

791 "Odgovor Džematskog medžlisa Reis-ul-ulemi," 18–19, "Drugi odgovor Džematskog medžlisa Reis-ul-ulemi," 38–39.

792 Karabeg, *Rasprava o hidžabu*, 11.

qualifications necessary for its execution was a perfect knowledge of Arabic language.⁷⁹³ He characterized Čaušević's efforts as illegitimate, arguing that his insufficient knowledge of the Arabic language disqualified him from practicing *ijtihād*.

Conservative criticism of, what Clive Kessler terms the 'ijtihādic approach' of reformists, cannot be merely reduced to an attempt to preserve their role as exclusive interpreters of Islam and their social authority.⁷⁹⁴ The modern Muslim debates on veiling in Bosnia and Herzegovina evidently show us that conservatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as their counterparts in other parts of the Muslim world, regarded *ijtihād* as something that would undermine Islamic legal tradition and the unity of the Islamic community.⁷⁹⁵ Their insistence on the authority of traditional '*ulamā*' and established doctrines and past authorities while could also be interpreted as an attempt to preserve their monopoly over Islam, certainly was closely linked to their concern about the future of already fractured community of Bosnian Muslims. If reformists understood *ijtihād* as a tool that ensures the return to authentic Islam and the progress of the Muslims, conservatives obviously regarded *taqlīd* as mechanism that ensures the link with the rich Islamic intellectual tradition and thus a stability of Islam, as well as the integrity of the Muslim community.

6.5. Islamic Community's Support for Unveiling after WWII: Continuation or Compromise?

After the establishment of communist regime after WWII the leadership of the Islamic community, contrary to majority of local imams, expressed formal support for the unveiling of Muslim women. To determine whether this support was mere strategic compromise to protect Islam under the new communist regime, or a continuation of earlier reformist efforts I will here examine articles published in *Glasnik Vrhovnog islamskog straješinstva u Federativnoj Narodnoj Republici Jugoslaviji*, the official herald of the Islamic community in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This publication featured several articles on the topic just before and after the 1950 enactment of the *Law on prohibition of wearing zar and feredža*.

Glasnik Vrhovnog islamskog starješinstva published four different articles discussing the issue of the Muslim woman's veil from religious, social, and cultural perspectives before the enactment of the aforementioned law. Although the articles differ regarding the approaches that were taken to analyse the issue, they uniformly supported the unveiling of Muslim women.

793 Karabeg, *Rasprava o hidžabu*, 12–13.

794 Clive C. Kessler, "Fundamentalism Reconsidered" in *Islam: Essays on Scripture, Thought and Society: A Festschrift in Honour of Anthony H. Johns (Islamic Philosophy, Theology, and Science)*, eds. Peter G. Riddel and Tony Street (Leiden: Brill, 1997): 338.

795 For more on this issue in a global context, see: Falk Gesink, "'Chaos on the Earth,'" 712–713.

In this context, the most important article is certainly one written by Muslim scholar Ibrahim Fejić, who assumed the role of Reis-ul-ulema in 1947. It systematically addressed the issue from a religious viewpoint. The analysis of Ibrahim Fejić's arguments supporting his claim that none of the Qur'ān verses about women's modest dress mandate complete veiling shows that his views were a direct continuation of earlier reform efforts by *Reis* Čaušević. Fejić, like earlier reformists, linked the revelation of the Qur'ānic verses on modesty to the cultural state of the Arabs at the time of the Revelation. Fejić describes family life of pre-Islamic Arabs as lacking the basic rules of modest comportment, stating that it was a common practice to enter one's homes without prior announcement, to mix freely among different generation and sexes and to walk half-naked.⁷⁹⁶ According to Fejić, interpreting the Qur'ānic verses on modesty within a broader literal and socio-historical context reveals that verses 24:31, 33:59, 24:27, and 24:50 were aimed at bringing order to early Muslim community. From his perspective, these verses generally instruct women to dress modestly and behave with dignity, protect women from ignorant youth and vilification, ensure the sacredness of home and family life, and shield family members from uninvited guests.⁷⁹⁷

Regarding the right to (re)interpret Islamic texts, Fejić embraced typical reformist view that Islam, as a universal religion revealed for all places and times, contains general principles that are open to new interpretation in accordance with the needs of the times and new situations. While Fejić advocated for the right to freely reinterpret the Qur'ān verses, he also referred to Islamic traditional exegetical authorities to claim that even Islamic scholarly tradition shows that the face veiling is not religious obligation.⁷⁹⁸

Three other articles published in the same number of the *Glasnik Vrhovnog islamskog starješinstva* were written by Muslim intellectuals: Selim Seferović, Hadži Hasan Ljubunčić and Hamid Kukić.⁷⁹⁹ In their articles we come across arguments previously present in the interwar discourse of secularly educated Muslim intellectuals.

They depicted the face veil as both a cause and a visible symbol of Muslim backwardness. Furthermore, these articles argue that it contributed to the external perceptions of Bosnian Muslims and Islam as backward and oppressive. The face veil was also seen as an obstacle to unity and the development of a socialist society in Yugoslavia, where Muslim women and

796 Hadži Ibrahim Fejić, "Pokrivanje žene u Islamu," *Glasnik Vrhovnog islamskog straješinstva u Federativnoj Narodnoj Republici Jugoslaviji* 1, no. 4/7 (1950): 100–101.

797 Fejić, "Pokrivanje žene u Islamu," 101–103.

798 Fejić, "Pokrivanje žene u Islamu," 102–104.

799 Selim Seferović, "Muslimanka sa zarom. Prijedlog za njeno otkrivanje," *Glasnik Vrhovnog islamskog straješinstva u Federativnoj Narodnoj Republici Jugoslaviji* 1, no. 4/7 (1950): 107–114; Hadži Hasan Ljubunčić, "Otkrivanje muslimanke. Referat održan na sastanku muslimana - javnih radnika u Sarajevu," *Glasnik Vrhovnog islamskog straješinstva u Federativnoj Narodnoj Republici Jugoslaviji* 1, no. 4/7 (1950): 117–120; Hamid Kukić, "Pitanje zara sazrelo je za konačno rješenje," *Glasnik Vrhovnog islamskog straješinstva u Federativnoj Narodnoj Republici Jugoslaviji* 1, no. 4/7(1950): 144–145.

men were expected to participate alongside others.⁸⁰⁰ Like religious reformists, they rejected the notion that the veil was a religious obligation and a means of preserving morality, arguing that the true morality is always the result of self-conscious and free acceptance of moral norms. In these articles we find well-known reformist idea that only self-aware and educated woman can truly protect her own and the morals of the community.⁸⁰¹

What is new in these articles, compared to previous debates, is the positioning of this issue in the broader context of building a new, socialist society. In this sense, these articles align with the general ideas and approaches found in the discussions of National Assembly members during the debate on the law prohibiting the veil. The discussions of members of the National Assembly were published in the *Glasnik Vrhovnoga islamskoga starješinstva* alongside the adopted text of the *Law on the prohibition of wearing zar and feredža*, after the law was enacted. They portrayed the face veil as a relic of the outdated social and economic system that reactionary, anti-socialist elements sought to preserve.⁸⁰² The advocates of the veil were presented not only backward reactionaries, but also as enemies of the new regime. The face veil was not associated with Islam or the broader Muslim world, but it was seen rather as a relic of Bosnia's history under the Ottoman Empire. Its ban was portrayed as a crucial first step in liberating Muslim women, a process that would reach its full potential with the elimination of class distinctions and the establishment of a new socialist socio-political system.⁸⁰³

While Reis-ul-ulema Fejić's views on veiling can be regarded as the continuation of the earlier religious reformists' interpretations of the issue, it is clear that a new socio-political and economic context significantly influenced the arguments and tone of the discussions in 1950. Not only that official herald of the Islamic community published articles that equated liberation from the veil with the liberation from class-capitalist relations, but it also completely neglected voices that could call into the question ban on the veil. The adoption of this law marked the beginning of a decades-long absence of any public debate on the issue. The issue of the religious obligation of full covering was revisited during the 1990s in a new specific socio-political environment, which gave the old debates a completely new tone.

800 Seferović, "Muslimanka sa zarom," 107–114; Ljubunčić, "Otkrivanje muslimanke," 118; Kukić, "Pitanje zara sazrelo je za konačno rješenje," 144–145.

801 Seferović, "Muslimanka sa zarom," 109–110; Ljubunčić, "Otkrivanje muslimanke," 119.

802 "Usvojen je zakon o zabrani nošenja zara i feredže," *Glasnik Vrhovnog islamskog starješinstva u Federativnoj Narodnoj Republici Jugoslaviji* 1, no. 8/10: (1950): 282.

803 "Usvojen je zakon o zabrani nošenja zara i feredže," 278–305.