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THE MAKING OF SECULAR ISLAM IN YUGOSLAVIA
AND REIS UL-ULEMA DŽEMALUDIN ČAUŠEVIĆ (1870-1938)

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Introduction

The 1920s and 1930s was labeled the Golden Age of Bosnian Islam. Arabic, Persian, and Turkish were widely used by Bosnian Muslim scholars and there were several attempts to modernize and Europeanize Bosnian Islam. Among them were attempts to develop a separate Bosnian Muslim identity linked to the history of Muslims in the Balkans and changes in the education system for Muslims in the area that would become Yugoslavia.

When Bosnia was conquered in 1463 by an Ottoman army under the command of Sultan Mehmet II Fatih, Islam did not automatically become the confessional faith for the inhabitants of the conquered regions. It would take centuries for the number of immigrants and converts to Islam to become a majority. However, the common people forgot these historic realities and Islam became an essential part of their ethnic and national identity. Bosnian Muslims became Muslim in nationality and confession. Over the four centuries of Ottoman rule, Islamic courts, waqfs (trusts), turbes (tombs of Muslim saints), mektabs (Islamic elementary schools),
madressas (Islamic high schools and colleges), masjids (mosques), kaneqahs (Sufi meeting houses), bathhouses, and traveler inns were built. By the end of Ottoman rule in Bosnia, Bosnian Muslims were Hanafi in madhab (school of Islamic jurisprudence), Muturidi in aqidah (school of Islamic creed), and Sufi in spiritual inclination. However, most Muslims were functionally illiterate and only had a superficial understanding of Islam. Džemaludin Čaušević, a reformist-minded scholar who was a student of the Egyptian modernist Muhammad Abdul, sought to change this status quo.

When Bosnia and Herzegovina fell under Austro-Hungarian occupation, and the later Kingdom of Yugoslavia, many social changes occurred. Bosnians were no longer under the rule of the Ottoman Sultan and their chief religious leader became the Reis ul-Ulema who was elected from among Muslim religious scholars in Yugoslavia. The first one, who was appointed in 1882, was Mustafa Hilmi Hadžiomerović (1816–1895). He served from 1882-1893. By the 1920s, Bosnian Muslims had lost their political power and control over much of the land that they owned in favor of Christians and after World War II, Communists who were vehemently opposed to Muslim self-determination. This occurred because of the fall of two empires—the Ottoman Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire where Bosnian Muslims had gained influence. Part of the rejection of Muslims’ empowerment was to attempt to annihilate any reminders of the Ottoman past. This was the context in which 20th century Balkan Muslim reformers, like Džemaludin Čaušević, had to work.
Čaušević’s Life

The turn of the 20th century saw the cultural and political transformation within Bosnia & Hercegovina. The reformist Džemaludin Čaušević emerged as a change leader due to his grounding in both traditional Islamic theology as well as modern science and thought. When Bosnian Muslim society was no longer ruled by the Ottoman Empire, they struggled to maintain a Muslim identity under non-Muslim rule (both Austria and later, Serb-dominated Yugoslavia). This led to a crisis of diaspora of Bosnian landowners and intellectuals to parts of the Ottoman Empire of which they were formerly a part. Under Austrian, and later Serbian rule, they lost social and political advantages they held for over four centuries when Bosnia was under Ottoman rule. Yet, at a time when it was popular for educated and religious Bosnians to leave their land for what was left of the Ottoman Empire, Džemaludin Čaušević fought this trend by returning to Bosnia when he finished his education in Istanbul.

From his youth in Bosanska Krupa and Sarajevo, Džemaludin Čaušević (1870-1938) was groomed for future leadership of the Bosnian Islamic community. First, at the hand of his father, Ali Hodža, and later under the Mufti of Bihać, Mehmet Sabit Ribić, at the medrese in Bihać, his aptitude and intelligence were readily apparent. At the age of 17, he was sent to Istanbul for further education in the empire’s celebrated law school, the Mekteb-i Hukuk, where he was exposed to ideas of reform and modernization.

Even at this early stage in his life, there are indications that Čaušević earned a well-respected reputation among the scholarly circles in his homeland. There are sources indicating

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1 All biographical information about Džemaludin Čaušević is from Enes Karić, “Islamsko mišljenje u Bosni i Hercegovini....” Reis Džemaludin Čaušević: Prosvjetitelj i reformator. Comp. Enes Karić & Mujo Demirović. (Sarajevo: Ljiljan, 2002).

that during the summer months while a student at the Mekteb-i Hukuk, he would, on invitation, travel back to Bosnia in order to speak at various venues. It was already apparent from his lectures at this time that Čaušević was receptive to notions of both religious and societal reform. Moreover, he spent some time in Cairo, where he intermittently attended the lectures of the famous Arab reformer Muhammad ‘Abduh (1849-1905). These lectures appeared to have had a considerable impact on Čaušević, since he refers to ‘Abduh in his later writings as Ustaz-i muhterem, “Respected Teacher.”

In 1901, after his graduation from the Mekteb-i Hukuk, Čaušević left Istanbul and returned to Sarajevo, Bosnia where he taught Arabic at the city’s Great Gymnasium. In September 1903, he was elected to be a member of the distinguished Meclis-i Ulema, the managerial body of Bosnia’s Islamic Community and was appointed to oversee Islamic religious educational institutions. He traveled widely in Bosnia-Hercegovina inspecting the conditions of the country’s mektebs and medreses. According to Traljić, such inspections, “were the first of their sort”, and even more so that they “strengthened Čaušević’s conviction that there would be no progress among [Bošnjaks], especially in the religious sense, without reform and the advancement of religious education.”

In 1909, Čaušević accepted a position as professor in the Austrian-Hungarian sponsored Sarajevo’s college-level Şeriat School in Sarajevo. His reputation towards reform in the education arena spread across Bosnia, and when Hafiz Sulejman Saraca (1850-1927) resigned from his position as reis ul-ulema in 1913, Čaušević became his successor. Thus, he was presented with the highest and most prestigious religious rank within the Islamic community of Bosnia-Hercegovina:

3 Karić, “Islamsko misljenje u Bosni i Hercegovini….” p. 18.
On March 26, 1914, on the eve of WWI, Čaušević was proclaimed the reis-ul-ulema of the Islamic community in Bosnia & Hercegovina. He remained in that position until 1930, when he resigned because of disagreements with the Serbian (Yugoslavian) government over the administration of vakfs and religious positions in Yugoslavia.\footnote{Ibid., p. 19.}

In 1930, he retired from his post as reis-ul-ulema, but Čaušević remained an active participant in the Bosnian Islamic intellectual discourse. He also translated the Qur’ān, together with Hafiz Mehmet Pandža, into the Bosnian language. The translation also included his reform-minded exegesis tefsir (commentary). On March 28, 1938, the reformer and former reis-ul-ulema, Džemaludin Čaušević, passed away.

The Calamity of Migration, 1878-1914

The first political and social crisis that Džemaludin Čaušević helped to lessen was the diaspora of tens-of-thousands of Bosnian Muslims that started with the occupation of Bosnia by the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1878. This would become a crisis later when the Serbian-dominated country took over Yugoslavia when the Austrian-Hungarian Empire fell after World War I.\footnote{Kemal H. Karpat, “The Migration of the Bosnian Muslims to the Ottoman State, 1878-1914: An Account Based on Turkish Sources” in \textit{Ottoman Bosnia: A History in Peril}. Ed. Markus Koller, Kemal Karpat, (Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 2004), pp 121-140.}

During the height of the Bosnian Muslim exodus to the Ottoman Empire, Džemaludin Čaušević was studying in Istanbul at the Mekteb-i Hukuk. He saw the arrival of Bosnian Muslims into Anatolia and other areas under Ottoman rule firsthand. As Čaušević felt this economic and intellectual brain drain would have a disastrous impact upon his homeland, he undertook an intellectual battle to stem this diaspora. His intellectual attack started with the idea that Bosnians had a place in the history and land of Bosnia and that they were European Muslims that had a
separate history, literature, and identity from their former Ottoman rulers. To do this, he had to attack the conservatism that had become rooted in Bosnian Islam.\(^6\)

**The Struggle for Reform**

When Bosnia fell under the Austrian-Hungarian Empire in 1878, and was fully incorporated in 1908, it was done with little military struggle on the part of the Ottomans. Given these circumstances, Čaušević was particularly focused on societal and religious reform, which adopted many progressive European values. Bosnia lost many intellectual and political elites when Bosnia was lost to the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, little assistance came to the Bosnian Muslims from that quarter after 1878. In Čaušević, the Muslims would see a forward-thinking leader who refused either to wallow in defeatism or to look towards a declining Ottoman Empire for religious and political assistance. The new reality was that Bosnian Muslims were part of a Christian Europe. To survive, they would need to reinterpret their faith and identity to reflect this new reality. According to Karić, the message of Džemaludin Čaušević was that, “The future, particularly a decent and successful Islamic future will not come by itself. The Bošnjak people have to put effort into creating an Islamic future.”\(^7\)

Without the political and military support of the Ottoman Empire, the Bosnian Muslims had to face the ominous specter of rising nationalist sentiments amongst the Serbs and Croats within Bosnia and the larger Yugoslavia. Part of the pressure upon Bosnian Muslims was to declare to be either “Mohammedan Croats” or “Mohammedan Serbs.” For the more extreme

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\(^6\) Ibid.

\(^7\) Karić, “Islamsko misljenje u Bosni i Hercegovini…” p. 24.
Serb nationalists, the goal was to assimilate the Bosnian Muslims into their *narod* (nation) as Christians through a three-pointed process of conversion, expulsion, and mass murder.⁸

Given his studies in traditional Islamic sciences and with the reformer Muhammad Abdul, Čaušević possessed the ideal background to take on these challenges. Furthermore, his studies at the secular-oriented *Mekteb-i Hukuk* and as head of religious instruction in Bosnia prepared him for an intellectual attack upon these challenges to a Bosnian Muslim religious and national identity. While in Istanbul, he encountered Istanbul’s leading modernist and reformist intelligentsia. Over time, he came to favor the ideas of reform. This position was further strengthened by the time spent within the study circles of Muhammad ‘Abduh in Cairo.

Čaušević was deeply committed to his faith, while pursuing his ideas of reform. He gained a large degree of credibility with Bosnian Muslims due to his grounding in the traditional Islamic sciences. He could effectively counter opposition to his reformist plans, which were ostensibly opposed to tradition and conservatism. In order for the reforms to manifest, they had to be presented in a manner that showed they were not heresy, and that there was a need to transform the old ideals into a new, more modern tradition. All modernists and reformers would face this issue since the traditionalists held the prior thirteen-and-a-half centuries of tradition as sacrosanct as well. He was able to argue this to assert the idea that the *ulema* were key to any reform and to the survival of the Bosnian Muslim people. For Čaušević, true Islam was bound in the Qur’ān and Hadith rather than in changeable customs and traditions.

The first major changes he made was to prepare education for women, the removal of the face veil, and the idea that Islam was a system of morality and ethics that was not counter to European ideas of modernity. His idea for the removal of the veil can be seen in the following pronouncement, “Although I am familiar with what *shari’a* (Islamic law) jurists and

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commentators have said, I prefer to abide by the prescriptions of the Qur’an, because it is eternal and for all times… The hierarchy of shari’a jurists is well known to me. This hierarchy is man-made and was not prescribed in the Qur’an.”

Čaušević did not, however, wish to consign the role of the traditional ulema to the shelves, or to completely unlock the gates of religious interpretation to just anybody with access to the Qur’an and a set of Hadith books. He was opposed to an ulema that was unable to deal with current social and political realities. Making Islam easier to practice and understand in the changing Bosnian context was his ultimate goal. Therefore, he would reject tradition when it made the religion difficult to follow. As such, he did not seek to change Islam, but only to make it easier to practice.

For Čaušević, reform was done out of the sheer necessity of survival. The Muslims in Bosnia had to endure drastic changes in the social and political structure of the land, and its cultural and social configuration as well. Čaušević realized that for Bosnia’s Muslim population to continue to survive in this new state of affairs, which often did not give them a secure political or social space, the need for reform and modernization was essential to allow the population to adapt to these adverse and unfavorable changes. This he defines as inevitability, proclaiming that, “necessity is a very powerful motivating force.”

Conversion and Its Political Repercussions

As mentioned above, conversion from Islam was an issue that Čaušević faced as a Muslim leader. In his writings, we find an instance where a Serbian bishop boasted of having

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11 Ibid.
converted a Muslim man, named Ahmet, to Orthodox Christianity. His conclusions about the causes of the conversion were as follows:

This Ahmet did not know God’s religion, Islam, in the way that he should have known it, and his faith was, as a result, vulnerable. We have many Muslims who are not educated about their religion, and as a result they do not have strength in their faith… [He then lists numerous texts and publications on Islam that exist in Bosnia]…these texts should be disseminated among the Muslims. In every Muslim village these _tefsirs_, these articles, should be read and taught to our people so that they can understand Islam.¹²

Čaušević believed that faith and knowledge were intimately intertwined, and in this regard, his ability to comprehend and cope with the complexities that the contemporary modernist states of Austria-Hungary and Yugoslavia brought to Bosnia-Hercegovina should be commended. As the Ottoman Empire withdrew from Bosnia, forced and voluntary conversions from Islam became more frequent since the Islamic laws and regulations designed to counteract apostasy from Islam could no longer be effectively enforced. Most of the conversions from among the Muslim population were to Catholicism. Most of these “occurred in peasant communities, and most began with the ‘theft’ of a Muslim bride by a prospective Christian husband.”¹³

Over time from the initial Ottoman conquest of Bosnia in 1463, to the transfer of the lands to the Austrian-Hungarian Empire (1878-1918), as ethnic and national identity began to be almost exclusively defined by religious confessions, the issue of conversion went from being an issue of tolerance to a highly contentious matter.¹⁴ Historically, religion and politics have been entwined in the Balkans, and even more so in 19ᵗʰ and 20ᵗʰ century Bosnia, where three rival religious communities contended for power. It is difficult to divorce these two elements from

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¹⁴ Ibid.
each other, and to do so would be a significant error. Donia holds that, “Between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries, the importance of religion as an ethnic delineator [in Bosnia] increased greatly.”

In the 19th century Bosnia the foremost underpinning of nationalism was unquestionably religion. People who spoke the same language and racial origin considered themselves different people or nations due to religious confession or even religious dominations. One cause for this was the remnants of the Ottoman Empire’s concept of millet where communities were formed based on shared religious faith rather than on the basis of race or language. Combined with the contemporary western European notions of nationalism, this made Balkan nationalism have a rather distinctive nature and disquieting character. Since Bosnians did not have a nationality in the modern sense, they were forced to use religion to identify “insider” from “outsider” and became the basis of nationalist rhetoric within their own developing national rhetoric. One of the issues that caused Bosnia’s Muslims to close ranks and create a stronger sense of “ethnic” community was the predicament of religious conversions and the “controversies surrounding religious conversions were instrumental in launching the Muslim autonomy movement.”

Čaušević employed religious discourse to camouflage political aspirations for Bosnian Muslims to continue to exist as a people; uniting as a nation was an indispensable undertaking. The core of Bosnian Muslim was Islam, and it would be an error to draw distinctions between political and religious. The religious reforms Čaušević undertook were calculated to garner political benefits. However, this did not mean he was not a sincere follower of Islam, nor that he was equally concerned for the spiritual welfare of the Bosnian Muslims.

15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
When the Serb-dominated Yugoslavia was created following World War I, Bosnian Muslims were forced to rethink and modify the understanding of their Islamic identity within a state where they were a definite minority. The issue of conversion also offered a new manner by which to approach reform. The Bosnian Muslim society was becoming more individual-oriented instead of community centered. This presented an opportunity of reform focused on educating the masses of Bosnian Muslims.

**Knowledge and Education**

The first area that Čaušević’s reformist ideals focused upon was how religious knowledge was disseminated and educational transformation to deal with the changing social and political situation for Bosnian Muslims. When he traveled Bosnia to visit and evaluate the programs at Bosnian madressas and mektabs, Čaušević found that Bosnian Muslims, especially in rural areas, were backwards socially and educationally. This backwardness would have permanent devastation upon the material and spiritual state of the Bosnian Muslims and Balkan Muslims in general.\(^\text{17}\) He suggested educational reform and expansion to counter this state of backwardness among the Muslim population of Bosnia (and Yugoslavia). After this was put into effect, Čaušević, felt every Muslim, including peasants, might be able to appreciate their faith in Islam.

The first text Čaušević wrote was a collection of moral tales to emphasize personal Muslim ethnic and moral development entitled *Dedini Menkabi* (religious instruction). This was a development that reflected the Yugoslav government drastically curtailed the influence that the *ulema* exerted over the Muslim population and it did everything in its power to relegate the role of Islam to the realm of personal piety, if not eradicate it altogether. Čaušević understood that in

\(^{17}\) Karić, “Čaušević kao reformator.” Reis Džemaludin Čaušević: Prosvjetitelj i reformator. Comp. Enes Karić & Mujo Demirović, p. 47.
the modern “secular” state, there was an increased sense of individualism, and thus, it was no longer sufficient to have only an elite *ulema* class which defined religion for the masses, without taking into consideration as to whether the masses truly understood it or not. The individual now had the unencumbered option to willfully break away from his or her own community and make personal choices regarding religion and even ethnic identity.

The conservative Bosnian society needed to deal with changes that had occurred following the Ottoman withdraw and the formation of the Yugoslav state. Čaušević’s solution for many of the unsettling matters generated by the Yugoslav state, was that the Muslim masses be thoroughly educated in the essentials of Islamic belief, and thus have the ability to understand why they were Muslim rather than being so simply because they were born into Muslim families. An increased awareness of Islam would lead to the solidification of Bosnian Muslim identity in the face of both Serb and Croat nationalism. The growing number of conversions from Islam after the retreat of the Ottoman Empire from Bosnia showed this was a necessity to preserve the Bosnian Muslim people as a nation. For Čaušević, this was a communal obligation commanded by Allah: “Our religion teaches us that religious foundations need to be taught with clear words and deeds. We are obligated to take care of our Muslim community; we are obligated to raise our youth in God’s religion, Islam.”

Čaušević encouraged his readers to be lifelong learners who learn from everything they observed, and to search the world for knowledge at a time when religion was losing ground to secularism in Western European. This was also a time of the golden age of Orientalism and its critiques upon Islamic religion and civilization. In spite of this, Čaušević not only encouraged Bosnian Muslims to travel in the search of knowledge, but he told them that the Qur’ān and the Prophet encouraged them to do so:

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The Qur’ān teaches us that we need to extract a lesson from everything that happens to us and around us. The Qur’ān teaches us and the Prophet tells that we cannot abandon knowledge… The Qur’ān orders us to travel, to see the world, to learn different languages so that we can easier learn the knowledge of different peoples.19

Čaušević also encouraged the study of foreign languages and travel in search of knowledge. Under him, one reform of the madressa system was to teach Latin and other European languages to future Imams and religious teachers. He felt such a search for knowledge could only strengthen the ties of the seeker to Islam.

Čaušević also fought to increase individual Muslims economic power at a time when Islamic trusts (waqfs) held much of the wealth in the Bosnian Muslim areas of former Yugoslavia and the secular state was wary of an organized religion holding such economic power. His resignation from his post as Reis-ul-ulama in 1938 was due to a clash over the administration of vakf property with the Yugoslav government.20 Over time, much of the vakf land was taken by the state, as was much land held by Bosnian family landowners, by a state bent on crushing their wealth and influence. Čaušević saw the only solution to this would be Bosnian Muslim entry into the world of finance and business as a counter to Serbian attempts to impoverish the Bosnian Muslim community. He used the language of the Qur’ān and Hadith in this appeal to encourage Bosnia’s Muslims to participate in trade and industry: “In several places in the Qur’ān and in the Hadis-i şerif (the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad) it is proven that Islam and its followers need to be on the highest pedestal of human endeavor. Therefore, we Muslims should be best in ahlak (manners), trade, and in supporting each other—in short morally and materially the richest people.”21

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Čaušević taught a Bosnian Muslim version of the Gospel of Wealth—material and spiritual wealth did not contradict each other, but that in fact, they were dependent on each other. He also held that learning how to amass wealth was a subject worthy of study. He wrote, “God has ordered us to give *zekat* (annual religious charity), to give charity to establish everything necessary for the survival of our religion. In order for these requirements to be fulfilled, it is necessary that Muslims be affluent.”

The modern schools that Čaušević proposed would teach the necessary knowledge and skills for the accrual of capital which was essential for the survival of the Bosnian Muslims as a people. The Bosnian Muslims as a group needed to accumulate wealth and influence, not just individuals. It was *farz* (obligatory) for the community to do so. He wrote, “It is obvious that all knowledge and all trades cannot be achieved by an individual, but certain fields of knowledge, certain trades and certain skills need to be possessed by certain groups within the Islamic community, and through that we will fulfill our *farz.*”

**The Printing Press**

Čaušević was eager to use the printing press to implement his reformist ideals. It was an essential tool to spread his ideas and to increase instruction and an Islamic knowledge base amongst the Bosnian Muslims. Čaušević’s goal of reaching the masses was made a reality through his full use of this tool.

In order to sustain the moral inheritance within our religion we need many resources, strong religious institutions, and capable, enlightened ulema. We are missing much of this today. Still, we can take advantage of at least one resource which will serve towards accomplishing our goal, and that is discussing and

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22 Čaušević, “Kur’an i muslimani,” in Traljić, p. 112.
23 Ibid.
solving all questions concerning us Muslims, through the press. Hence we have decided to start a literary paper called *Novi Behar* (New Spring).\textsuperscript{24}

It is compelling to note the enormous trust that Čaušević put into mass printing, to the extent that he hoped it would compensate for the dearth of “strong religious institutions and capable, enlightened ulema.”\textsuperscript{25} It is instructive to note that one of the earliest texts printed was entitled *Ulema i Narod* (The Ulema and the People), which argued that the *ulema* had lost any possibility to have influence in the modern era since they are more worried about their influence with the wealthy and whether tobacco is *haram* (forbidden), if *dhikr* (remembrance of the names of Allah) beads are *bidah* (innovation in religious practice), and such issues rather than protecting their community and increasing its general level of Islamic and secular knowledge.\textsuperscript{26} That this and an earlier pamphlet on Islamic morality were written or translated by his hand shows the importance he put upon education in preserving and/or developing a Bosnian Muslim identity.

Nevertheless, Čaušević’s desire to put Islamic literature into the hands of the common man was not without its detractors. The traditionally conservative-minded *ulema* criticized Čaušević because he gave the common Muslim masses insight into complex religious questions through his *Novi Behar* magazine. The conservative *ulema* held that the masses were incapable to participate in discussions upon matters of theological intricacies. Furthermore, if they were allowed to do so, they might end up holding flawed and bewildering conclusions about Islam that have no scholarly basis. Čaušević believed that every Muslim was required to have a basic knowledge of their faith and that this would increase their appreciation for Islam. For him, the

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{26} *Serati Mustekim* (1943). *Ulema i narod*. Originally published by Prva muslim. nakl. knjižara i štamparija (M. B. Kalajdžić), 1914. Translated from Turkish. 24 pp. Item 37 in their catalogue. Translated from *Sirat-ul-Mustaqeem* newspaper by Čaušević.
key to a brighter future for the Bosnian Muslim masses was education and self-awareness. His attempts to restructure the *mektabs* and *medressas* was not completed to his reformist vision. The mindset of the people had to desire reform for this to occur.

Čaušević himself set goals for his literary paper, the *Novi Behar* (which fittingly means “New Spring”):

The assignment of the *Novi Behar* will be to counter false religious interpretations, which leads to the stagnation of the people, to restrain all evil sides of modern life, to throw off a misunderstanding of the time in which we live, to regulate false understandings of the freedom of consciousness and behavior. To connect the moral values of Islam with the material abundance of the West, represented by knowledge and technology, meaning to achieve a happy life in both worlds.²⁷

It is obvious that Čaušević attempts to bridge the chasm between Islamic tradition and the modern world, and that he was a strong proponent in the combination of non-obstructive tradition and modernity, which would provide for a more secure future for the Bošnjak people. The literary paper itself is the best example of his proposal to use technology to disseminate to the Muslim public the spiritual value of Islam.

**Reforming Hutbes and the Arabic Script**

Among the many reforms that Čaušević introduced into Bosnian Muslim society was for all *hatips* (readers of Friday sermons in mosques) to deliver their *hutbes* (Friday sermons) in Bosnian instead of the traditional Arabic. The attendants of the Friday prayer service would gain the benefit of understanding their content in addition to their prayers. Čaušević had other tangible reforms, which included the translation of the Qur’ān from Arabic into Bosnian, as well as the adaptation of the Arabic script for the Bosnian language.

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²⁷ Čaušević, “Braćo muslimani,” in Traljić, p. 27.
Following his retirement, Čaušević translated the entire Qur’ān into Bosnian (1937) in collaboration with Hafiz Mehmet Pandža. His translating the Qur’ān increased his prestige as a reformer and leader of the Bosnian Muslim community. His translation was based on the text with his own commentary rather than that from traditional mufassirun (commentators of the Qur’ān). The appeal of his translation was to the Bosnian Muslim masses, and this appeal gave him the authority for reform. The translation gave the common man (and woman) the ability to understand the word of God rather than having to get the ulema (Islamic scholars) to interpret it for them.

Since Bosnian Muslim identity was also tied to the Arabic script, Čaušević’s work served as a clear demonstration of the cultural identification of Bosnian Muslims within the world of Islam. This usage of the Bosnian language written in the Arabic script merged Balkan Slavic culture with the Islamic faith to create a new culture and tradition that was manifestly Bosnian Muslim. Čaušević modified the Arabic alphabet by adding additional letters so that it could be better adjusted to the Bosnian language. The new letters would stand for the distinct sounds in Bosnian, as P, and also Ž, Č, Ć, and so on that did not exist in Arabic. The letters for these non-Arabic sounds were formulated from similar ones used in Persian many centuries earlier. This allowed more Bosnian Muslims to efficiently read older Bosnian texts written in the Arabic script.

Finally, with Čaušević giving the hutbe in Bosnian, he made an apolitical statement against those who continued to give it in Arabic, because giving it in Arabic made the hutbe useless to the countless Bosnians who did not understand Arabic. Beyond changing the language that the hutbe was delivered in, he advocated having the topic focus more on topics of worldly usage than solely on the hereafter. He felt people needed guidance in this world as much as they

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needed guidance for the next world. In a speech welcoming Ramadan, Čaušević presented the following supplication:

O God! Let us shake off our centuries-old sleep so that we may raise educated scholars who will be able to raise a people who will know and want to interpret the lofty counsel of the Qur’ān in the clear language of their listeners. O God! Let us have hatibs who will be able to interpret from the mimber (pulpit) certain ayets (verses) of the Qur’ān in the mother tongue of their listeners. O God! Let all this come true, so that villagers do not sleep during the hutbes on Fridays because they do not understand Arabic or Turkish… We are living in a time where we are even forced to use hutbes in the Bosnian language to open eyes and awaken feelings among Muslims. Hutbes were established for that reason.²⁹

This was also the time when Džemaludin Čaušević was working on his own translation of the Qur’ān, and he meant to make it known to his fellow Bosnian Muslims that if it is permissible to translate the Qur’ān into Bosnian, why then should it not be permissible to give the Friday sermon in Bosnian?³⁰

Čaušević and Other Reformers – Čaušević’s Legacy

Džemaludin Čaušević followed the methods, patterns, and objectives of other reformers of his age: use of the printing press, allowing women to uncover their faces, calling for educational reforms, etc. The rhetoric that he used was evocative of other reformist calls throughout the Muslim Middle East (Muhammad Abdul and Shaqib Arslan, among others) and Central Asia (the Ulema i Narod was one of several). This can be seen in his reprinting the works of Egyptian and Central Asian reformers translated into the Bosnian language. He censured his fellow Muslims for having drifted into the “deep sleep” of apathy and defeatism:

Muslims fell into a deep sleep, from which they were not able to wake up until the Europeans, with their weapons of knowledge and all sorts of inventions, came to

³⁰ Karić, “Islamsko misljenje u Bosni i Hercegovini….” p. 35.
the door of their house and demonstrated the divine truth: Knowledge and ignorance cannot be equal, knowledge always triumphs over ignorance.31

The focus of all the reform was to increase the knowledge base of the Bosnian Muslims through giving the sacred knowledge to women and the masses. To correct the position where non-Muslims conquer Muslims and took away their power and influence, increasing the knowledge base to include as many Muslims as possible (including women) was the way reformers sought to follow. When the Bosnian Muslims once again knew how to interpret the Qur’ān correctly, they should look to other European nations as models of proficiency and advancement in order to regain the worldly wisdom they once possessed. The reformers were sincere believers who did not question the authenticity of the Qur’ān. Their goal was to reinterpret the Qur’ān so that its real message became the search for divine and secular knowledge, which would include moral and material enrichment.

Even though Džemaludin Čaušević passed away in the year 1938, his scholarly and political legacy continues among the ulema and intellectual of Bosnia-Hercegovina who face the same problems that faced him almost a century ago. The conditions have changed on the ground. After his death, over 100,000 Bosnian Muslims were slaughtered in World War II since they sided with the Croats, a half-century of communist state rule and a genocidal rampage was enacted against the Bosnian Muslims by their Catholic and Orthodox neighbors during the War of Independence from 1991 to 1995. These slaughters were little more than attempts to eradicate the “remnant” of a hated, but long-passed Ottoman rule. Finally, Čaušević gave his people a means to increase spiritual well-being and Islamic faith to help them survive the turmoil that they faced throughout the 20th century. Čaušević’s greatest contribution was giving the Bosnian Muslim people the sense of dignity and self-worth that would help lay the foundation for the

creation of a much needed Bošnjak national identity which was tied to land, history, and faith to replace the communist-developed Muslim ethnic identity.

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