

Bosniak-Serb Relations from 1831 until the WWII during the Growth and Development of the Orthodox Church: Institutionalism as a Religio-Political Concept of Changing Cultural Patterns and Power Relations

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Abstract

This paper traces the development of the Orthodox Church institutions in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina during the De-Ottomanization process of Southeastern Europe in the 19th and early 20th centuries. It also focuses on the responses from the institutions and intellectuals of the Muslim population to events that followed the Belgrade Metropolitanate gaining autonomy in 1831. In addition the paper discusses the Orthodoxy's increasing influence and the declining influence of Islam on social trends and the formation of political ideas and approaches.

The "Eastern question" remains significant in the Balkans, which means that these relations have their geopolitical implications. Given the holistic approach, attention is given to this relationship in the wider Balkan and even global context, due to clear connections in social movements during the De-Ottomanization of the Balkans, beyond Bosniak-Serb relations. The analysis also includes the consequences of certain religious and popular teachings within these universal missions on the ideological and cultural conflicts.

Keywords: Islam, Orthodoxy, Serbs, Bosniaks, Balkans, De-Ottomanization, cultural patterns, geopolitics, ideology.

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Ortodoks Kilisesinin Büyümesi ve Gelişmesi Sırasında 1831'den II. Dünya Savaşı'na Kadar Boşnak-Sırp İlişkileri: Değişen Kültürel Kalıpları ve Güç İlişkilerini Konu Alan Dinî-Politik Bir Kavram Olarak Kurumsalcılık

Öz

Bu makale, XIX. yüzyıl ve XX. yüzyılın başlarında Güneydoğu Avrupa'nın Osmanlısızlaşma sürecinde Sırbistan ve Bosna-Hersek'teki Ortodoks kilisesi kurumlarının gelişiminin izini sürüyor. Ayrıca Belgrad Metropolitiği'nin 1831'de kazandığı özerkliği takip eden olaylara müslüman nüfusun, özellikle kurumlar ve entelektüeller tarafından verdiği tepkilere de odaklanılıyor. Ortodoksluğun artan etkisi ve İslam'ın sosyal eğilimler ve siyasi fikir ve düşünce oluşumu üzerindeki etkisinin azalması yaklaşımlar da tespit ediliyor.

“Doğu sorunu”nun hâlâ Balkanlar'da önemli aktörleri var, dolayısıyla bu ilişkilerin jeopolitik sonuçları da var. Bütünsel yaklaşım göz önüne alındığında, Boşnak-Sırp ilişkilerinin ötesinde, Balkanlar'ın Osmanlısızlaştırılması sırasındaki toplumsal hareketlerdeki açık bağlantılar sebebiyle bu ilişkiye Balkan ve hatta küresel bağlamda dikkat edilmektedir. Analiz aynı zamanda bu evrensel misyonlar kapsamındaki bazı dinî ve popüler öğretilerin ideolojik ve kültürel çatışmalar üzerindeki sonuçlarını da içermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İslam, Ortodoksluk, Sırp, Boşnaklar, Balkanlar, Osmanlısızlaşma, kültürel kalıplar, jeopolitik, ideoloji.

Introduction

The rise and fall of empires and states across a vast area from the Adriatic to Central Asia, over an extended period (13-16th Century), turned this region into a meeting point of Islam and Orthodox Christianity, or between Muslim and Orthodox peoples specifically. From the Balkans through the Black Sea region and the Caucasus to the Central Asian Turkish states, this line of encounter and conflict was exceptionally long.

In many ways, the Ottoman Empire symbolized Islam, with the neighboring Orthodox states, such as Byzantium, Bulgaria, Serbia, Wallachia, and Russia, treating it as a general religious-civilizational relationship. In the Balkans, this was particularly evident because, from the late 14th Century until the early 20th Century, the Ottoman Empire was the dominant power and eventually held the caliphate from the early 16th Century onward. On the Balkan Peninsula, where the “crossroads of worlds” had long been established, the encounter between Islam and Orthodox Christianity had not only local characteristics, but also global effects, especially after the Russian Empire began to play a significant role in the region between the late 18th and early 19th Centuries.

While the strengthening of Russia under the rule of Peter the Great (1682–1725) did not have a significant impact on the Orthodox population of the Balkans, in the second half of the 18th Century, Russophilia gained more

supporters. The episode with Stephan the Little (Stefan Mali) claiming to be the Russian Tsar Peter III and his time at the helm of Montenegro (1767–1773) is a clear illustration of this.¹ When Catherine the Great (1762–1796) ascended to power in Russia, the era of collaboration among Orthodox peoples and their systematic efforts to weaken the Ottoman Empire became an undeniable reality. She played a significant role in the emergence and spread of Pan-Slavism, under whose auspices Orthodox peoples and states were supposed to strengthen and consolidate their positions.

Catherine the Great led two wars against the Ottomans, in which Russia made significant gains. The Russo-Turkish War (1768–1774) initiated the process of collaboration between Orthodox peoples within the Ottoman Empire and Russia. After a series of defeats, on July 21, 1774, representatives of the Ottoman Empire signed the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca. According to this treaty, the Crimean Khanate gained formal independence but effectively became a vassal state of Russia. This war was part of the continuous expansion of the Russian Empire southward and eastward during the 18th and 19th Centuries. A significant Russian breakthrough was the right to protect Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire and intervene in case of Turkish “abuses.” In this way, Russia produced opportunities to provide massive support to the Orthodox Christians and engage in political and security maneuvering within the Ottoman state.²

A more substantial improvement in relations between Russia and the Serbs occurred in the early 19th Century, during the First Serbian Uprising (1804–1813). Montenegrin bishop Petar I, who had spent some time in Russia, sought Russian assistance for a general Orthodox uprising against the Ottomans, offering the Romanovs control over Serbian-Montenegrin territories. In the second year of the Uprising (1805), the Russian emperor decided to financially support the Serbs, and in 1806, entered into war with the Sultan, which lasted until 1812. Russia withdrew from the war largely due to Napoleon’s advance towards Moscow and signed the Treaty of Bucharest with the Ottoman Empire, recognizing Ottoman rule over the Smederevo Sanjak.

In this way, Russia demonstrated that the South Slavic Orthodox population was a valuable argument in negotiations with both the Ottomans and the Habsburgs. International events, especially Napoleon’s defeat, prompted

1 Anton Milošević, “Šćepan Mali”, *Matica*, 72 (2017): 189-252.

2 Edin Mutapčić, “Istočno pitanje i Bosna i Hercegovina. Period ravnoteže (1699-1774)”, *Javni i privatni aspekti nužnih pravnih reformi u BiH: Koliko daleko možemo ići?*, eds. Mirela Čokić-Jasmina Alihodžić (Tuzla: Pravni fakultet Univerziteta u Tuzli – Centar za društvena istraživanja Internacionalnog Burč univerziteta, 2014), 335-346

Mateja Nenadović (a notable leader of the First Serbian Uprising), in agreement with Prince Miloš Obrenović, to offer to annex Serbia to Russia or grant Serbia a status similar to Wallachia and Moldavia, i.e., to become a Russian protectorate.³ This fostered a deeper cooperation, providing Russia with significant maneuverability. The battles during the Second Serbian Uprising (1815) were brief, with the Sultan eventually granting autonomy to the Serbs. With the Treaty of Edirne (1829), Russia secured additional autonomy for the Serbs and the annexation of six districts of the Bosnian Eyalet that the Serbs held during the First Uprising (which would be one of the main reasons for the uprising of Husein-captain Gradašćević in 1830).

Negotiations on resolving the Serbian church issue began even before the establishment of the Principality of Serbia and concluded in 1836. In the correspondence conducted in 1830 and 1831, the Ecumenical Patriarch Constantine I, Russian envoy to the Ottoman Empire Alexander Ivanovich Ribopjer, and, through the Serbian delegation in Constantinople, Prince Miloš Obrenović participated. The stance of Russian diplomacy, which fully supported Serbian interests regarding statehood, was less exclusive concerning church autonomy. Ribopjer suggested to Patriarch Constantine I, in the interest of Orthodoxy, to be flexible, but Russian diplomacy as a whole did not advocate for the patriarch's spiritual authority in Serbia to remain merely formal. Considering the state of the Serbian clergy, Russia favored a solution where the Patriarchate would have greater rights in the selection of bishops, as well as guaranteed revenues from the dioceses.⁴

Two Ottoman royal decrees (1830 and 1833) completely disrupted agrarian relations and Ottoman administration in the Principality of Serbia. With the first decree, Muslims were prohibited from settling in the Principality (excluding the Ottoman army stationed in fortresses), and all other provisions that marginalized Muslims from everyday life were connected to the impossibility of "Turks" participating in the judicial authority that was now in the hands of the Serbs, specifically the prince.⁵

By 1833, the status of the Muslim population in the Principality of Serbia was established, particularly in Belgrade and its surroundings (under the jurisdiction of the *muhafiz*/protector of Belgrade). Muslims were allowed to live in the Belgrade fortress and town but were not permitted to construct

3 See: Matej Nenadović, *Memoari* (Beograd: Portalibris, 2017).

4 Nedeljko V. Radosavljević, "Autonomija pravoslavne crkve u Kneževini Srbija i arondacija episkopija 1831-1836", *Istraživanja*, 25 (2016), 233-248.

5 Irena D. Kolaj Ristanović, "Kulturni identitet muslimana u Beogradu 1841-1867", (Ph.D. diss., Belgrade University, 2021), 6.

their buildings outside the town's boundaries. They were forced to adhere to the regulations of the Serbian administrative and executive authorities, marking the end of a crucial period in the history of the Serbs on one hand and initiating a fateful process for the Muslims on the other.⁶

Official diplomatic relations between the Principality of Serbia and Russia were established in 1838, serving as an indirect demonstration of Russia's role as the guarantor of the future survival of the Serbian state. However, Russia was primarily guided by political considerations, unlike the Balkan Orthodox peoples who felt the war against the Ottomans had a "nobler" connotation in that they saw it as a war against Islam. This is evident in the principles proclaimed during the time of the Serbian Uprising regarding the fate of the Turks (Muslims), stating that the fewer there are, the freer Serbia is, and they should not be trusted. These words of Karadjordje led to the conclusion that the Serbs aimed to liberate themselves from everything Turkish (Muslim).⁷

In the time of Russian Tsar Alexander I, at the beginning of the 19th Century, the Russian leadership was committed to maintaining relations with the Ottoman state. Count Kochubei (Виктор Павлович Кочубей), the closest adviser to Alexander I, sent a memorandum stating that Russia, due to its vastness, has no need for further expansion; it has no quieter neighbors than the Turks, and the preservation of these natural enemies should be the basic rule of Russia's future policy.⁸ Similarly, a few decades later, Russian Chancellor Karl Nesselrode (Карл Васильевич Нессельроде), already thinking geopolitically, warned that if the Ottoman state were to collapse, such states could be formed that would not hesitate to compete with Russia.⁹

From Autonomy to Sovereignty. When politics and religion go hand in hand

In such circumstances, Serbia began to build its statehood. Russia's influence on the socio-political currents in the Balkan region was nuanced and held strong implications for the Serbs related to the organization of the Church. The first step toward the independence of the Church was

6 Kolaj Ristanović, *Kulturni identitet*, 7.

7 Kolaj Ristanović, *Kulturni identitet*, 5.

8 Valeriy Morkva, "Russia's Policy of Rapprochement with the Ottoman Empire in the Era of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1792-1806", (Ph.D. diss., Bilkent University, 2010), 95.

9 Matthew Rendall, "Restraint or Self-Restraint of Russia: Nicholas I, the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi, and the Vienna System, 1832-1841" *The International History Review*, 24/1, (2002), 37-63.

taken by Miloš Obrenović in 1822 when he began paying bishops from his own treasury and then negotiated with the Ecumenical Patriarchate about the Serbs organizing the Church.¹⁰ The gradual resolution and rejection of the influence of the Phanariots during this period led to the strengthening of the church organization. After the royal decree (1830), confirming Serbia as an autonomous principality, there followed the act of independence through the possibility of independently choosing bishops, which the Patriarchate in Constantinople would only confirm, not appoint, as it had been done until then.

The royal decree also altered the position of Prince Miloš towards the Ecumenical Patriarchate because, in the context of international relations, Serbia ceased to be an Ottoman rebellious province and became an autonomous principality under Ottoman sovereignty and Russian protection. The Ecumenical Patriarchate had to take this newly established state into account, as the royal decree guaranteed political autonomy to Serbia, and the Patriarchate could not resist the church autonomy of the new principality.¹¹

Construction efforts were also made. The Cathedral, the old Church of Saint Mark, and the Topchider Church were erected in Belgrade. The Cathedral was built on the site of the old church, constructed during the Austrian occupation (1717–1739), and dedicated to the Archangel Michael. The construction began in 1836 and was completed in 1845, after Prince Miloš was no longer on the throne. Before the construction of the Cathedral in downtown Belgrade, the Serbian prince (who reigned from 1831 to 1836) built the church in Topchider, dedicated to the apostles Peter and Paul, which served as the court church as it was located next to the prince's residence and was the seat of the Serbian Metropolis for a period.¹²

The first Serbian who became the Metropolitan of Belgrade was Melentije Pavlović. The skillful Miloš Obrenović managed to secure a contract with the Synod of the Patriarchate, recognizing self-governance for the Serbian Church in 1832. Through this agreement, the Belgrade Metropolitan and bishop were granted the title of the Archbishop of Belgrade and the rank of Metropolitan for the entire Serbia.¹³

10 Radoslav M. Grujić, *Pravoslavna srpska crkva* (Kragujevac: NRIO Svetlost-Kalenić, 1989), 148.

11 Đoko Slijepčević, *Istorija Srpske pravoslavne crkve 2. Od početka 19. veka do kraja Drugog svetskog rata* (Beograd: JRJ, 2002), 213.

12 Nebojša Bogunović, *Srbija u vreme kneza Miloša Obrenovića* (Smashwords Edition, e-book, 2013), 15.

13 Radosavljević, "Autonomija pravoslavne crkve u Kneževini Srbija i arondacija episkopija 1831-1836", 233-248.

Melentije issued the Church Constitution for the Metropolis and collected old Serbian charters and letters. His idea was to establish the “School of Orthodoxy” in Kragujevac, serving as a kind of extension of the seminary founded by Vićentije Rakić in Belgrade in 1810. Although he was at the helm for a very short time, he laid solid foundations for the canonical order of the church and regulated relations between the Serbian Orthodox Church in the Principality of Serbia and the Ecumenical Patriarchate.¹⁴

Following Melentije’s untimely death, Pavle Jovanović, known as Petar (1833–1859), assumed leadership of the Church. He aimed to align the Serbian Church with Svetosavlje (Saint Sava’s teachings) and sever ties with the Phanariots, achieving some success. The development of a national consciousness was closely tied to internal processes within the Church, demonstrating both human and intellectual capacity. Pavle Jovanović proclaimed the Memorandum on Spiritual Authorities in Serbia (*Начертаније о духовним властима*) during the National Assembly on May 21, 1836, marking the first written church law in Serbia. In his term, the Seminary was reopened in September of the same year.¹⁵

The Serbian people were strongly connected to pre-Christian “natural religious beliefs,” which played a significant role in the essence of Svetosavlje. There was a certain continuity of ancient mythical beliefs, and magical-religious practices of folk tradition were preserved and incorporated into the annual calendar through life cycle rituals and celebrations. For example, the Serbian *slava* (patron saint feast), a unique expression of Orthodox belief, is a strong indicator of pagan influence.¹⁶

In this way, the Serbs preserved the spirit of their people and ancient beliefs but in a new form. Taking all this into account, the notion about a clash of civilizations in the area where Islam and Orthodoxy were the main forces has appeared attractive to many authors, among whom Huntington is the most famous.¹⁷ Rather, the conflict existed between historically developed traditions rather than between civilizations or religions and the teachings of Holy Scriptures.¹⁸

14 Slijepčević, *Istorija Srpske pravoslavne crkve*, 216.

15 Kolaj Ristanović, *Kulturni identitet*, 223.

16 Alexis P. Vlasto, *The Entry of the Slavs into Christendom: An Introduction to the Medieval History of the Slavs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 223.

17 Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?”, *Foreign Affairs* 72/3 (1993): 22-49.

18 Admir Mulaosmanović, “Islam and Muslims in Greater Serbian Ideology: The Origins of an Antagonism and the Misuse of the Past”, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 39/3 (2019): 300-316.

Socialist Svetozar Marković, contemplating Serbian Orthodoxy, stated that the faith among the Serbs consisted almost entirely of customs, mostly of folk origin, which had acquired a somewhat church-religious form. In his opinion, the people held all their customs, as well as their faith, as a sacred duty to defend, despite the moral aspects of Christ's faith not being fully embraced by the Serbian people.¹⁹

Another important reason for the Serbian ideological matrix lies in the teachings of the Russian Orthodox Church. The influence of Russian ideology in Serbian churches, especially the ideology of the Third Rome, during the 19th century was strong enough to penetrate the political sphere and significantly impact it. Moscow, as the Third Rome, was primarily recognized as a defensive ideology (Monk Philotheus, 16th century), so it took quite some time for it to become offensive, which eventually occurred through pan-Slavism. The great Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevsky declared that Moscow would become the Third Rome only when its Slavic brothers became united.²⁰ This approach opened the doors for imperial Russia to initiate the Eastern Question, which then appeared as a pragmatic approach to Orthodox/Serbian expansionist politics in the Balkans.²¹

The Muslim population in the Principality of Serbia was under increasing pressure. During the 1830s, political conflicts within the emerging Serbian establishment would also influence them, though not as drastically as in the times to come. When Prince Mihajlo Obrenović ascended the throne and shortly afterward moved the capital from Kragujevac to Belgrade (April 25, 1841), the situation became even more complex. He was soon replaced by Aleksandar Karađorđević due to both internal and external political pressures. The 1840s were a time of conflict between the Orthodox and Muslim populations in Belgrade due to the emergence of great intolerance, with one of the main reasons being the migration of Orthodox population from Austria because of the 1848 revolution.²²

A large number of refugees changed the demographic landscape of Belgrade as the Orthodox population continuously grew, while the Muslim population declined, partly due to gradual emigration. Muslims, among whom there were few ethnic Turks, still constituted the majority in the cities of this *sanjak* at the beginning of the 19th Century, with a significant

19 Slijepčević, *Istorija Srpske pravoslavne crkve*, 247.

20 Fjodor M. Dostojevski, *Srbi između Rusije i Evrope* (Beograd: Prosveta, 2014), 100.

21 Peter J. S. Duncan, *Russian Messianism: Third Rome, Revolution, Communism and After* (London: Routledge, 2000), 38.

22 Safet Bandžović, "Muslimani u Smederevskom sandžaku. Progoni i pribježišta (1804.-1862.)", *Novi muallim*, 62 (2015), 58-79.

number of Muslims having arrived from Bosnia after the Treaty of Belgrade in 1739.²³ Now, this began to change.

Certainly, the development of the legal system also contributed to the Muslim sense of non-belonging. The Serbian Civil Code (1844) abolished the Ottoman land holding system, and the work of artisans was regulated by the Crafts Law (1847), according to which Muslims could not be a part of Serbian guilds. The stabilization of the monetary system by introducing Austrian coins marginalized the Muslim population in the economic life of Belgrade (which naturally had strong implications for the overall position of Muslims).²⁴

As time passed and reforms took hold, the economic and social position of Muslims became burdensome. Throughout this period, the Church strengthened and successfully developed. Political changes due to popular dissatisfaction provided an opportunity to address the church question, and Metropolitan Petar, on February 29, 1840, submitted the project "Organization of Spiritual Authority in the Principality of Serbia" (*Устројеније духовни власти књажества сербскога*) to the Assembly. This act planned the vertical structure of Church authority, culminating in the Episcopal Council as the highest hierarchical authority.²⁵

Metropolitan Petar's longstanding efforts to bring about a new law which was dominated by his proposals eventually paid off. The new law on church authorities was adopted in 1847. This was the "Organization of the Spiritual Authority of the Principality of Serbia" of August 23, 1847. The need for institutional multiplying in Serbia prompted the enactment of this new law. According to its provisions at that time, the following bodies of spiritual authority existed in the Principality of Serbia: episcopal consistoriums, the Appellate Court, and the Holy Episcopal Council, thereby clearly demarcating church and state authority. The Church became significantly more independent, and its organization gained a canonical character in the fullest sense.²⁶

In the Bosnian (and from 1833, Herzegovinian) *eyalet*, the situation began to have negative connotations as well. Ferdo Šišić writes that "Bosnian and Herzegovinian Muslims began a bitter and bloody struggle with the sultans (...), from 1820 to 1851, and the consequence of their actions

23 Safet Bandžović, "Muslimani u Smederevskom sandžaku", 58-79.

24 Kolaj Ristanović, *Kulturni identitet*, 12.

25 Dragan Novaković, "Ustrojenije duhovnih vlasti knjažestva Serbskoga iz 1847. godine – drugi zakon o pravoslavnoj crkvi u Srbiji", *Anali Pravnog fakulteta u Beogradu*, 57/1 (2009), str. 232-248.

26 Kolaj Ristanović, *Kulturni identitet*, 224.

was the complete collapse of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian Muslim feudal aristocracy, which never recovered from that heavy blow.”²⁷

The connection between the position of the Orthodox (as well as Christians in general) in the Bosnian and Herzegovinian *eyalet* and the position of Muslims in the Principality of Serbia did not exist in terms of seeking reciprocity or a joint solution. Still, the shifting of the “ball” across the Drina River was gradually gaining momentum. In fact, it is recorded that as early as 1810, Serbian insurgents “crossed the Drina in several directions, terrorizing the Bosniak population in border villages,” leading to the escalation of conflicts and the undertaking of necessary defensive activities from the Bosnian side.²⁸

The mission of Omer-pasha Latas and the Ottoman Empire’s entry into the Crimean War (1853–1856) on the side of England, France, and Piedmont (Kingdom of Sardinia) further aroused the Orthodox population. In this period, the Bosnian-Serbian border increasingly became a kind of front, of a location where larger armed conflicts could be expected, especially because news of the possibility of a Christian (Orthodox) uprising, which facilitated more aggressive behavior by the Principality of Serbia, reached Bosnian nobles.²⁹ Metropolitan Mihailo, who succeeded Petar in 1859 (previously the bishop of Šabac), contributed to this, having very fruitful relations with Bosnian Franciscans Jukić and Nedić.

However, the general relationship was becoming increasingly negative, often fueled by writings that would make many propagandists envious. Kolaj Ristanović mentions, for example, how the Austrian traveler Rasch wrote about Belgrade, which still exuded an oriental charm:

In 1866, the Turks abandoned the so-called ‘Turkish city,’ but there were still wattle-and-daub huts covered in mud and wooden houses in which they had dwelled for centuries in Belgrade. There were still winding, narrow, and dirty streets, typical of every Turkish city. [...] Above this pile of dirty houses rose the domes and minarets of mosques that the Asian nomads had left. The burden that the Turks had imposed on the whole country by occupying Serbian fortresses was still pressing on the main Serbian city.³⁰

27 Ferdo Šišić, *Kako je došlo do okupacije a onda i do aneksije Bosne i Hercegovine 1878. odnosno 1908: diplomatska strana njihova o šezdeset i tridesetgodišnjici događaja* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1938), 19.

28 Bandžović, “Muslimani u Smederevskom sandžaku”, 58-79.

29 Galib Šljivo, “Emigriranje iz Sjeverne Bosne u prekosavske krajeve u toku Krimskog rata”, ed. Šehić N. *Migracije i Bosna i Hercegovina* (Sarajevo: Institut za istoriju, 1990), 133-148.

30 Kolaj Ristanović, *Kulturni identitet*, 13.

This quote displays European intolerance towards Islam and Muslims in clear language, as negativity can be inferred from every sentence. The traveler almost calls for a change in the city's physiognomy and heritage, urging for the swift removal of every reminder that Muslims have ruled and lived there for centuries. Such openly anti-Islamic writing is in additional accord with the broader European sympathies of that time towards Serbia as a leader in liberating itself from the "Turkish yoke."

Declining and uprising. Connected vessels system

The Congress of Berlin (1878) in many ways represents a change in the general paradigm and relations in this part of Europe. The emergence of the Kingdom of Serbia in 1882, after gaining full independence four years earlier, also changed the essence of relations between Islam and Orthodoxy. As Jovan Dučić says, Serbia, somewhat freer from the pressure of Austria and Russia after the Crimean War, showed the potential to attract all South Slavs under "Turkish" rule.³¹ Already during the so-called Nevesinje Uprising (1875), which resonated in Herzegovina and then ignited Bosnia, Serbia found an opportunity to militarily cross the Drina and attempt to expand its rule to the territory of present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina. A large number of volunteers arriving from Russia to fight against the "Turks" testified to its significant involvement. After the Congress, Serbia's aspirations and intentions became increasingly evident.

By the end of the 19th century, the church organization had become quite strong, both in Serbia and Montenegro, and was also developing in Bosnia and Herzegovina. What had been suppressed until recently—the desire for the cross to prevail over the crescent—was gradually becoming a public proclamation. Montenegrins were described as heroes who soared high, viewing their entire epic struggle through the service to the cross: every one of their deaths, and there were many in the past, was a voluntary contribution to the revenge for Kosovo with a deep awareness that their entire existence served the defense of Christianity.³² Obtaining autocephaly in 1879 was certainly significant for the rise of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC). Both the political and religious power of the Serbs led to their dominance in the South Slavic region.

Metropolitan Mihailo (1859–1881; 1889–1898) deserves credit for improving the church organization and intellectual life by enhancing education. He initiated the establishment of the Second Department of

31 Jovan Dučić, *Jugoslovenska ideologija istina o "jugoslavizmu": politička studija*, (Čikago: Centralni Odbor Srpske narodne odbrane u Americi, 1942), 9.

32 Slijepčević, *Istorija Srpske pravoslavne crkve*, 189.

the Seminary (Party Seminary) in 1873, which selected students from “all Serbian regions under the Turks and almost from all Serbian lands.” The task was to prepare enthusiastic teachers and priests as national workers who “contributed significantly to the liberation of a part of the Serbian people” in the wars of 1876–1878.³³ As a Russian student and reformer based on the knowledge he acquired, he laid the foundations for the Serbian Orthodox Church and its overall relationship with the region. Cetinje Archimandrite Nićifor Dučić said of him that after Saint Sava, the Church did not have a “more enlightened and dignified and deserving shepherd.”³⁴

As Metropolitan Mihailo never relented his interest in the Orthodox population in Bosnia and Herzegovina, he sent Milorad Pavlović-Krpa on a secret mission. In his book *Orthodoxy in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (1898), published in Belgrade and attributed to the author P. M. Tomić, Pavlović presented his observations. The book states that the Orthodox in Bosnia and Herzegovina ruled after Austro-Hungary (1878), living under strong political and religious pressure. The author said:

The people desperately struggle, endure incredible sacrifices, even though they know and feel that their struggle is in vain as long as they remain under the rule, which is an open enemy of Orthodoxy and the Serbian nationality. Every honest man in Bosnia is clear that the people will always be persecuted as long as they are under occupation, and that the religious problem, which is of vital importance, as well as the agrarian issue, will not be able to be resolved in any way.³⁵

This explanation also reflects the overall relationship between Serbs and Bosniaks, indicating that the primary goal was to gain control over the territory where Orthodoxy would prevail, that is, which was defined as the Serbian living space. After the departure of the Ottoman state, the Austro-Hungarian monarchy hindered Serbian propaganda for some time due to its good relations with the Bosnian Muslim elite in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Phanariots (Greeks) governed the Church in Bosnia and Herzegovina.³⁶ The propaganda the Serbs aimed at them continues to echo in today’s literature. They were called corrupt, backward, and opponents of Christianity and Serbianism. Sava Kosanović, in a letter to General Jovanović in 1879, says:

33 Slijepčević, *Istorija Srpske pravoslavne crkve*, 245.

34 Petar R. Nikolić. “Liturgijski život i liturgijska teologija u Karlovačkoj mitropoliji u XIX veku”, (Ph.D. diss., Belgrade University, 2022), 27.

35 Slijepčević, *Istorija Srpske pravoslavne crkve*, 280-281.

36 The term Phanariots in South Slavic literature mostly represents the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Orthodox church organization.

Detested Greek metropolitans neither have the knowledge nor an idea of how the church should be governed according to the spirit of the times. (...) Except for a few exceptions, the priesthood acts according to its will. Since the Greek church leaders never made an effort to elevate the clergy intellectually, but only to enrich themselves, Greek-Eastern priesthood remained, at the expense of the country's population, at the lowest level of education.³⁷

Russians, of course, were stirring in Bosnia and Herzegovina, so they initiated a proclamation by the Orthodox masses, in which Luka Vukalović (1869) demanded rebellion against the Patriarchate in Istanbul and follow what was happening in Bulgaria (i.e., the *sanjaks* covering the territory of present-day Bulgaria). "Remember what the phanariots did to us, remember, you, brothers Bosniaks (here addressing Orthodox residents of Bosnia and Herzegovina, ed.), what the Sarajevo metropolitan did in reality to Banja Luka. What happened a few years ago in Mostar when he turned Turk and died as a convert (...)", and just a few days earlier, Bulgarians called on the Orthodox in Bosnia and Herzegovina: "Turn to Serbia and Montenegro, brothers, see how there the clergy is from the people, with the people, and for the people, see how education begins to flourish there, and look how progress is made there while we and you remain in slavery, darkness, and ignorance. And who is to blame for all this? The fanariot band."³⁸

This attack on the phanariots was, of course, an attack on the Ottoman state, which was Russia's primary goal. Orthodox masses under Ottoman rule were provoked in this way to become disobedient and hostile to the authorities. However, there was also growing opposition, misunderstanding, and hostility between the two communities. Muslims were perceived and described as combative religious fanatics tied to their land, with Bosnian Muslims being portrayed as rising against anything that endangered their faith.³⁹

An interesting remark was made by a correspondent for the Novi Sad *Zastava* from Bosnian Krajina (1870) when he "emancipatorially" spoke about the greatest misfortune that no one had tried to bring the "deluded Bosnian Turks" out of their confusion and darkness. "Unfortunate individuals suffer just like the Christians from the Ottomans, but the stupidity of the Qur'an

37 Slijepčević, *Istorija Srpske pravoslavne crkve*, 307.

38 Slijepčević, *Istorija Srpske pravoslavne crkve*, 307-8.

39 More about it in: Grandits Hannes, Clayer Nathalie and Pichler Robert eds., *Conflicting Loyalties in the Balkans. The Great Powers, the Ottoman Empire and Nation-Building* (London: I.B.Tauris & Co, 2011).

and foreign instigation have led them even more astray, so they hate their native brother and co-sufferer of the Orthodox faith, worse than their oppressor.”⁴⁰ The reporter also provides the basic reason for this behavior from Bosnian Muslims when he states that there has been a fear for a long time that the discord between Bosnia and Serbia would lead to the loss of both faith and property, just as it happened in Serbia.

The period after the Berlin Congress brought significant changes and challenges for Muslims in the Balkans. Through an international treaty, both Muslims in the Kingdom of Serbia and under the Austrian occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, obtained minority status. In a proclamation in 1878, Emperor Franz Joseph I promised protection for all inhabitants in these regions “in terms of their life, religion, and their property.”⁴¹ The Convention of April 1879 guaranteed “freedom and external rites of all existing religions” to the entire population of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although this might have seemed daunting, compared to some other areas that had previously fallen under non-Islamic rule (Crimea in 1783 or Budzak [southern part of Bessarabia, today part of Odesa Oblast in Ukraine] in 1812), Balkan Muslims did not fare so badly.⁴² However, yet again, this did not achieve much in terms of protection against the encroaching Greater Serbia, and subsequently during the development of radical ideologies in Europe in the first half of the 20th Century.

Ottoman authorities attempted to maintain balance by granting religious freedoms to the Orthodox Christians in the Bosnian and Herzegovinian *eyalet* (from 1867, Bosnian *vilayet*). However, matters were evidently slipping out of control concerning both the local communities and the European powers. The Orthodox Church was gradually establishing itself even in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with priests becoming standard-bearers of national ideas, particularly Serbdom. A school for the education of clergy was founded in Mostar in 1858, according to Skarić, and later transferred to Žitomislić. Figures like Nićifor Dučić and Serafim Perović worked in this school and played a pioneering role in building Orthodox institutions in Herzegovina. In Bosnia, Vasa Pelagić was involved in a similar effort.⁴³

40 Slijepčević, *Istorija Srpske pravoslavne crkve*, 320.

41 Slijepčević, *Istorija Srpske pravoslavne crkve*, 329.

42 Kemal Karpat, “Građanska prava muslimana Balkana”, ed. Fikret Karčić Muslimani Balkana: Istočno pitanje u 20. vijeku, (Tuzla: Behram-begova medresa, 2001), 93-118.

43 Vladislav Skarić, “Iz prošlosti Bosne i Hercegovine 20. veka”, *Godišnjak društva istoričara*, 1 (1949), 7-41.

The question of jurisdiction and affiliation of Bosnian and Herzegovinian Orthodox Christians became increasingly significant. Many, such as Sava Kosanović, Sarajevo Metropolitan Antim, and others, sent letters advocating the annexation to the Metropolitanate of Karlovci. Nonetheless, the Patriarchate in Istanbul still held sway over this matter, requiring its opinion and approval first. The Metropolitan of Karlovci, German Anđelić, passionately advocated for the annexation of the Orthodox Church organization in Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Metropolitanate of Karlovci in 1879, asserting, "As the right of the Porte to govern and possess Bosnia and Herzegovina has become illusory, the same is the case with the Patriarchate of Constantinople when it comes to Bosnia and Herzegovina."⁴⁴

The De-Ottomanization of the Balkans was well underway, although a shift in paradigm only occurred recently. Even though the Ottoman Porte still retained supreme authority over Bosnia and Herzegovina, the entry of the Austro-Hungarian army into Sarajevo was symbolic. Kosanović, associated with Belgrade and Metropolitan Mihailo and a driving force behind pan-Slavic propaganda in the Balkans, had a significant role in the period from 1875 to 1878. Before the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, he led the Orthodox youth in Sarajevo and assembled them as the "Christian Legion," expressing joy at the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁵

Russia, concerned about Austria-Hungary's actions, advocated over its representative in Belgrade Persijani (Александръ Иванович Персияни) for the idea of an independent church in Bosnia and Herzegovina or, if that was not possible, maintaining a connection with the Patriarchate. However, the signing of the Concordat in 1880 granted the Austro-Hungarian monarch the right to place Orthodoxy under its jurisdiction, showcasing different approaches to the issue and even leading to personal conflicts, most notably between Anđelić and Kosanović.⁴⁶ While the struggle for ecclesiastical and educational autonomy, initiated in 1896, successfully concluded in 1905, the Church in Bosnia and Herzegovina remained under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate until the end of World War I. These events reflect the complexity of political and religious dynamics in the Balkans during that time.

In the cultural fabric of Bosnian-Herzegovinian society, various celebrations were initiated, with the most significant being the feast of St. Sava. According to the report of *Srbski Dnevnik* from 1857, the first St. Sava celebration in Bosnia and Herzegovina took place in Sarajevo,

44 Slijepčević, *Istorija Srpske pravoslavne crkve*, 330.

45 Slijepčević, *Istorija Srpske pravoslavne crkve*, 333.

46 Nikolić. *Liturgijski život*, 30.

attended by a large number of citizens and staff from the Habsburg consulate.⁴⁷ By the end of the 19th Century, this celebration significantly spread throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, extending to rural areas.

There is no doubt that the Muslim population viewed all of this with suspicion and disbelief. The fact that the Orthodox Christians celebrated the decline of the Ottoman state, which Muslims considered their own and hoped for its return, along with the rise of public anti-Ottoman sentiments, caused a divide. However, during this period, the Bosniak-Muslim population in Bosnia and Herzegovina was not as exposed to peril as Muslims across the Drina in Serbia. Memories of the massacre in Sjenica (1809, today in Serbia), the burning and destruction of Užice, Šabac, and other places in Serbia influenced the fear of Bosnian-Herzegovinian Muslims that similar things could happen to them, regardless of assurances to the contrary.⁴⁸

While Serbia was preoccupied with state-building, changing alliances, and conquering new territories, antagonism between Islam and Orthodoxy grew as a product of the relationship between the “defeated former master and the victorious former servant.” Many religious, mythological, and general social elements became embedded in this relationship, devoid of the possibility of rational understanding and finding solutions. The beginnings of political action, following European models, helped Bosniaks discover ways to act in these new and not-so-friendly circumstances. The struggle for religious-educational autonomy led to the formation of the first political party, the Muslim National Organization (MNO), in 1906. The program of the MNO clearly indicated the unfavorable position of the Bosniak people, reflecting the reality of their position, not only as a nation but also in terms of their religion, culture, and material circumstances.⁴⁹

We must, above all, fight for religious-educational and political freedoms, which are the foundation for our further cultural development. However, a healthy foundation for this fight can only be provided by good material conditions because only then, when we are ready to endure greater material sacrifices, will our rights be respected. We must implement political organization to collectively demand our rights, but we must also, if not before, simultaneously establish economic organization, which would be a secure and robust refuge for our struggle. (Musavat, no. 5, November 13, 1906.)⁵⁰

47 Borivoje Milošević, “Svetosavske proslave u Bosni i Hercegovini pod austrougarskom upravom”, *Crkvene studije*, 20 (2023), 467-480.

48 Bandžović, “Muslimani u Smederevskom sandžaku”, 58-79.

49 Admir Mulaosmanović, *Kratka politička historija Bošnjaka* (Sarajevo: International University of Sarajevo-Simurg media, 2018), 12-13.

50 Abid Đozić, “Bosanskohercegovački suverenitet u političkoj djelatnosti MNO-a”, *Znakovi vremena*, 10/35-36 (2007), 226-240.

Uncertainty of Islam among South Slavs

The escalation of conflict and negative attitudes towards Bosniaks and Islam gained momentum after the end of World War I. The tumultuous three years of the establishment of the Kingdom of SHS (1918–1921) placed Bosniaks in a difficult position. In that newly established state (named the Kingdom of Yugoslavia after 1929), approximately 2,000 Muslims were killed in that three-year period, while the perpetrators, though known, were not held accountable in court. Looking at the overall social life and the position of the Bosniak people, it is clear that they were at the mercy of the Serbian political factor and the Serbian population as a whole. The Serbs felt that the new state should exclusively serve their interests and desires. Political turbulence also affected other regions, with growing resistance to the established centralism, especially in Croatia, but among Bosniaks, it became more dramatic. In this regard, the then *Reis-ul-Ulema* (Head of Muslim Scholars) Džemaludin Čaušević attempted to arouse European public opinion, primarily in France, with an open appeal and an explanation of what was happening to Bosniaks.⁵¹

Before his famous interview with Charles Rivet for the Temps newspaper, Čaušević strongly addressed the People's Government of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in 1919. He stated that Orthodox compatriots, driven by religious hatred, were terrorizing Muslims. Because of this, he bitterly presented specific data to Rivet.

Around a thousand people killed, 76 women burned, 270 villages looted and destroyed – this is the balance for us Muslims, celebrating the joyful holidays, the birth of Yugoslavia that we were ready to serve with all our souls. After the arrival of Serbian troops, the subdued hostility expressed by our Orthodox compatriots turned into active hatred under the watchful eye of our occupiers. Faced with torture, murders, massacres, whose numbers increase every day, the Serbian armed forces are satisfied to be passive observers when they themselves do not have the role of participants. Their conduct toward us is evidently unfriendly. Hasn't every Muslim been disarmed of any weapons that could be found with them, only to later distribute them to the Orthodox population? What else to say but that our disarming is desired to better slaughter us! After the new state of affairs, we have no more protection.⁵²

51 Šaćir Filandra, *Bošnjačka politika u 20. stoljeću* (Sarajevo: Sejtarija, 1998), 59.

52 "Krik za spas Bošnjaka: Intervju reisa Džemaludina Čauševića iz 1919. godine za francuski list Le Temps", available from <https://intelektualno.com/intervju-reisa-dzemaludina-causevica-iz-1919-godine-za-francuski-list-le-temps/>, Internet; accessed 17 May 2023.

Relations became increasingly strained, with a prominent emphasis on the “Turkish sin” of the local Muslim population. Through agrarian reform (just as Milorad Pavlović-Krpa indicated in 1898), Bosniaks became rapidly impoverished, and the stagnation in cultural development and political strength contributed to worsening the people’s position. Bosnia and Herzegovina, with its political subjectivity, was supposed to be an oasis where the religious and cultural identity of Bosniaks would be somewhat protected. However, in 1929, with the January 6th Dictatorship and a new administrative division into *banovinas* (the largest administrative units), that oasis disappeared. Even before that, the deterioration was visible and systematic. Therefore, the *Ilmijja*, led by Muhamed Tufo, issued a Resolution of the Muslim *Ilmijja* regarding textbooks for the youth on October 10, 1925. In a letter to the Government and Mehmed Spaho (Minister of Transportation), they emphasized that they considered the “educational damage to Muslim youth very dangerous.”⁵³

They pointed out that, in addition to the content of school textbooks, which posed an obstacle to the proper education of Muslim youth, the celebration of various church saints was culturally insensitive. According to the Resolution, the school as an educational institution must not have days dedicated to Christian saints, which “offend the religious feelings of one part of the citizens.”⁵⁴ The Resolution also accentuated the reintroduction of the celebration of St. Sava and the obligation of Muslim students to attend it. Overall socio-political relations in the South Slavic region were becoming more tense, with the Bosniak population sinking into increasingly concerning water. Waves of emigration that began in 1878 took away both the economic and intellectual strength of the people. Members of the middle and upper classes were leaving, so that by the early 1930s, the situation was more than difficult.

Muhamed Pilav speaks about this very issue – an individual with a unique biography and intriguing destiny (he provided significant information about the Ustasha emigration in Italy as the only Bosniak who was in a Ustasha training camp). He recounts what Mehmed Spaho told him during a meeting in the early-30s, where Spaho insisted that they must sign the Zagreb Points (1932) and “forever separate from Byzantium.”

Oh, my son, it’s easy for those in Zagreb; they write and sign it together with their Serbian friends. It’s easy for those in Slovenia; they are united.

53 Irena Kolaj Ristanović, “Gajret o sadržaju školskih udžbenika i utjecaju na muslimansku omladinu: prilog proučavanju međureligijskog dijaloga u Kraljevini SHS/Jugoslaviji”, *Glasnik etnografskog instituta SANU*, 68/3 (2020), 725-748.

54 Kolaj Ristanović, Gajret o sadržaju školskih udžbenika, 725-748.

In Belgrade, it is signed by Davidović, Trifunović, and company – they are Serbs. But we in Sarajevo are mixed with those who contributed to the creation of the January 6th dictatorship; they are the bearers of this regime. Look at Milan Srškić – the king’s best friend, entering the king’s palace without prior notice. These Serbs here are eagerly waiting to target us. We must be silent and wait for this situation to change. (...) My son, I see you’re full of energy and idealism. But when your Foča is on the border, it will be a slaughterhouse! They will slaughter you and your friend. Those in Belgrade and Montenegro will know about it and celebrate it before we do in Sarajevo. We must endure and wait for the change that time will bring.⁵⁵

The extent to which Islam lost its position is illustrated by an episode related to the celebration of Eid al-Adha in 1937. The proclamation of the Regulation with the force of law amended and supplemented the Law on the Islamic Religious Community of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia on February 28, 1936 (including the relocation of the Grand Mufti’s headquarters from Belgrade to Sarajevo). A significant change also came with the constitutional provision regarding the flag (green with a white crescent and a five-pointed star in the middle). When these flags were hoisted around the city for Eid, the reaction of the Orthodox population was more than harsh.

Since the new flags appeared before the regulations on how and where they should be displayed were drawn up, the Ban of the Drina Banovina informed Stojadinović in June 1937 about the “extreme religious conservatism” of Sarajevo supporters of the Yugoslav Muslim Organization (JMO), which was “manifested even on Eid al-Adha.” He reminded that “until now, it was not allowed to display religious (green) flags,” but for Eid, these flags appeared on mosques and some civil institutions and cafes in Sarajevo. Because of the display of green flags, local Serbs began to protest, marking it as provocation, stating that the Spahićs use the power they have in their hands.⁵⁶

This event caused a significant change. In a way, it caused anxiety among people who were aware of the challenges looming over the entirety of Europe.

With the Munich Agreement between British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and German Nazi Chancellor Adolf Hitler in September 1938, the path was opened for the Stalin-Hitler agreement (Molotov-Ribbentrop

55 Muhamed Pilav, *U ustaškoj emigraciji s Pavelićem: Sjećanja vječitog pobunjenika, zatvorenika, bjegunca* (Zurich: Bošnjački institut, 1996), 12-13.

56 Zlatko Hasanbegović, “Spahina Islamska vjerska zajednica: Između obnove vakufske autonomije i stranačkog nadzora 1935.-1938”, *Historijski zbornik* 63/2 (2010), 489-520.

Pact) in August 1939, which, however, did not yield the results the great powers desired. Similarly, on the domestic front, there was the Cvetković–Maček Agreement. Instead of appeasement (the peace of our time, as Prime Minister Chamberlain called the agreement with Nazi Germany), a global conflict broke out in September 1939, and the South Slavic region also became a conflict zone after just 18 months, taking on the character of a civil war and revolution.⁵⁷

Conclusion

Detecting the relations between two neighboring nations (in general or within a specific timeframe), and even more so, two nations living together in the areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Montenegro, through the prism of universal religions such as Islam and Orthodox Christianity as one of the most significant Christian denominations, is not a simple task. However, some relief comes from the quite concrete fact that universalizing and positioning this relationship above national collective identities or the actions of the active communities which determined their mutual behaviors, thoughts, power relations, and values. That fact is that the Orthodox majority in the Southeastern European region, after gaining independence for their national states in the 19th Century, “labeled cultural forms and contents recognized as Ottoman heritage as foreign and marginalized them.” In the new narratives based on Western Orientalism and Russian Pan-Slavism, “Turks” were positioned as the hostile Other. Both in a general oriental and a more specific way, Islam and the Ottoman legacy were perceived as backward and opposed to European, Christian, pre-Ottoman, Western, and modern values.⁵⁸

As this paradigm peaked throughout the 19th Century and beyond in the entire Southeastern European region, it shaped the relations between Bosniaks and Serbs. It is also evident that the passage of time brought deterioration, often leading to serious armed conflicts accompanied by persecutions, killings, and massacres. This characteristic in the relationship between Bosniaks and Serbs was present throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

Since the establishment of the Belgrade Metropolitanate in 1831, the institutionalization of Orthodoxy was constant and represented a valuable segment of the overall Serbian ascent. The Church managed to

57 Mulaosmanović, *Kratka politička historija Bošnjaka*, 59.

58 Marija Mandić, Jadranka Đorđević Crnobrnja, foreword to “Islam, pojedinac i de-latne zajednice u Srbiji: akteri promena, sukoba i saradnje”. *Glasnik etnografskog instituta SANU*, 68/3 (2020), 519-532.

influence the entire state apparatus in Serbia. This article indicates that the institutional growth of Orthodoxy introduced significant ideological assumptions that, in the social context, marginalized Muslims. The founding of the Second Department of Theological Seminary aimed to educate personnel to promote the national idea in areas that were “under the Turks,” i.e., to Serbianize the Orthodox population in these areas and then establish Orthodoxy as the dominant religion, culturally and in every other possible way.

This goal was achieved at the expense of the position of Islam and Muslims, who, by losing their positions, became a foreign and unwelcome guest (certainly no longer a host). Over time, more radical methods were employed by the Orthodox, as anti-Islamic sentiments grew stronger. The weakening position of Muslims appeared to further resign the Serbs, now the rulers of the South Slavic region, leading them toward approaches where the “final solution” appeared as a positive outcome. This became evident during World War II when Bosniaks in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Sandžak were subjected to genocidal attacks by Chetnik units.

Over this period of slightly more than a hundred years (1831–1939), the Bosniak response to such an approach became increasingly faint. This relationship between these two nations (and two cultures) is well reflected in the poetic figure from Gundulić’s *Osman*: “The circle of fortune revolves, spinning without stopping: who is up, there he goes down: and who is down, there he rises.” With the departure of the Ottoman state from Serbia and then from Bosnia and Herzegovina, the process of De-Ottomanization was enacted vindictively, with ideas about eradicating the conqueror’s culture and religion receiving positive echoes. Bosniak leaders and Islamic scholars attempted to use resolutions, appeals, and other forms of warning to alert both the authorities and general public about the increasingly difficult situation. Most often, their cries remained unheard and without a concrete response.

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