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**SINTETIČKO I KONTEKSTUALNO IZUČAVANJU ISLAMA U
OBRAZOVNIM USTANOVAMA ISLAMSKE ZAJEDNICE**

**SYNTHETIC AND CONTEXTUAL STUDIES OF ISLAM IN
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS OF THE ISLAMIC COMMUNITY**

ILUSTRACIJA - Ahmad Sayri, *Detail - Kur'an*; Perzija, Safavidski period, 1598. godine.

ILLUSTRATION - Ahmad Sayri, *Detail - Qur'an*; Persia, Safavid period, 1598.

Dr. Ekrem Tucaković završio je studij perzijskog jezika i književnosti, magistrirao je na polju književnohistorijskih nauka, a doktorirao na temi: *Odnosi s javnošću u funkciji ostvarenja cilja Islamske zajednice*. Kao koautor objavio je knjigu *100 bošnjačkih imama iz perioda 1912-2012*, te više stručnih radova i novinskih članaka. Od 2006. godine obavljao je dužnost urednika Rijasetovog web-portala www.rijaset.ba, a potom rukovodioca Službe za odnose s javnošću Rijaseta Islamske zajednice, te od 2015. godine bio je glavni i odgovorni urednik islamskih informativnih novina „Preporod“. Trenutno je na dužnosti šefa Odjela za visoko obrazovanje, nauku i kulturu Uprave za obrazovanje i nauku Rijasetu Islamske zajednice u Bosni i Hercegovini.

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Abstract

The educational institutions of the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina have a long tradition of training in Islam that emerged and developed in different frameworks of public law and different cultural contexts. In the course of intensive discussions on the presence of Muslims in Europe and debates on solving the Muslim issue, and on models of educating imams and Muslim authorities, educational institutions of the Islamic Community have the opportunity to offer their own concept of Islamic education based on synthetic and contextual studies in Islam. The synthesis of the entire Islamic intellectual tradition will re-discover the authentic potential of the Islamic message in Islamic sources and tradition, a potential which may be an equal and credible partner in the contemporary Bosnian and European context. On the other hand, if it aspires to be relevant, to work in the European context Islamic education must inevitably focus on studying crucial issues of the European environment and offer satisfactory answers. The text of the Qur'an makes it known that context provokes even God's direct response and intervention. Tafsir exegesis science includes chapters on the motives for publicizing certain Qur'an ayahs chapters and surahs sentences. The Divine Revelation does not ignore context; rather, it shows its great importance. Besides, Muslim intellectual tradition inherited the practice of applying religion in context. The Muslim educational system has long felt a pressing need to educate and profile the context-'ulamā' (scholar), experts who have both religious knowledge and the authoritative knowledge of context. In this respect, educational institutions of the Islamic Community should offer their own model based on their experience and authentic understanding of Islam and Islamic intellectual tradition, since such a model cannot be offered by Europe. This paper argues for the development of a concept which will be a proactive result of Bosnian Muslim intellectual self-awareness and universal responsibility for mankind, rather than being a passive *adjustment of Islamic thinking and Islam to Europe*, waiting for European instructions. In the shift from the present paradigm of *adjustment* to a new stage, the paradigm of *promotion* and *recognition* is necessary.

Key words: *education, Islamic education - training, educational institutions of the Islamic Community, synthesis, synthetic approach, context, European context, context-'ulamā' (scholar).*

Challenges of Islamic Education - Training

Over the last century and a half, education in Islam in the institutions of the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has a long tradition in different historical, state and legal frameworks and significant achievements, has been proceeding in a broader European context and has become inseparable from it, since it is where Bosniaks-Muslims and the Bosnia state exist and live their European political, social and cultural reality – and not only due to their geographic position. As part of the cultural and political European space, Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina are primarily interested in a concept of Islamic education that can authentically articulate the content in which the Muslim identity does this mean in a unique way, or initially develops as a universal model of meaning and hope for humanity. At present, this seems to be the essential and crucial challenge for Muslims and their institutions, and a high caliber response would allow them to establish themselves as a contemporary community that can transform the potential of Islam and the Divine Revelation into appropriate solutions for the needs of contemporary man, regardless of his worldview. Each person's basic needs are identical: from finding the meaning of life to achieving social harmony and justice, and a worldview that can provide them has a promising future.

On the other hand, the concept of Islamic education is becoming an increasingly significant issue of the contemporary European discourse on Islam and Muslims, with a significant prospect of remaining one of the essential social and educational issues in some European countries in the long term. The fact that millions of Muslim communities from Asian and African countries, descendants of former immigrants, remain permanent citizens of European countries, as well as the large migration movements toward Europe and the permanent need of European economies for the import of labor are some of the important factors which make the reality of a significant Muslim presence inevitable even in countries where there used to be no Muslims, let alone autochthonous communities as is the case with Balkan Muslims. This has resulted in the necessity of resolving the distinctive issues and needs of Muslim communities in Europe.

One of these distinctive issues and needs of the European Muslim population is the organization of religious life and the establishment of an appropriate concept of educating training imams and religious authorities who will have the capacity, in the new social reality, to be authentic interpreters of Muslim spiritual needs in sound correlation with diverse social environments and within an entirely new cultural base and tradition.¹ For instance, teachers of the Muslim religion in European public schools – the right to religious education is available to Muslims in most European countries – have to master both Islamic education and the distinctive educational standards of the respective countries according to which the classes in other subjects are delivered. School systems tend to harmonize and align teaching standards and that certainly pertains to Islamic religious education as well. On the other hand, educational systems are of crucial national significance and every country is keen to develop its own educational concepts and policies. Education conveys not only knowledge and scientific heritage but also common values, a worldview, and a nation's culture and identity. Consequently, the state cannot remain indifferent to educational processes, particularly in the components that create a basis for social cohesion or essentially define relations in the community. When viewed from this perspective, the issue of educating imams and religious teachers or organizing religious affairs concerns not only Muslims but also national states and society in general. If Muslims want to be active participants in European societies, if they want to highlight their distinctive issues as those of public significance and participate in establishing public institutions with recognized values of their own, by the necessity of the law of interconnected vessels, the state and society will respond in one way or another or express interest in their requests and define their position toward their participation in public life and possible transformation of their own social and cultural substance. „It is through education that a nation, a society or a civilization consciously passes on the accumulated skills, knowledge and wisdom of the past to future generations. Education not only preserves the cultural identity and historical legacy of the society but ensures its survival as a distinct entity. It furnishes a worldview within which the society seeks to solve its problems, delineates its social relations and economic activity, makes sense of itself, pushes the frontiers of knowledge, and continues as a living entity.“² Muslims find challenge and encouragement in current European discussions of Muslims' ability to build or achieve, in their own identity, a mutually acceptable position in the European cultural space, as well as in discussions of Muslim cultural adaptability and the political implications of the Muslim presence, which often end in discussions of the security of European societies and threats to Western cultural identity. Although one aspect of these discussions pertains to the quality and competitiveness of Muslim education in general, and the values that shape the Muslim worldview and mindset through this education, they still,

¹ See: Ceric, Mustafa, *History of the Institutionalized Training of Imams in Bosnia-Herzegovina*. In Willem B. Drees and Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld, et al.: *The Study of Religion and the Training of Muslim Clergy in Europe: Academic and Religious Freedom in the 21st Century*. Leiden University Press, 2008, pp. 277-299.

² Ziauddin Sardar, Jeremy Henzell-Thomas, *Rethinking Reform in Higher Education: From Islamization to Integration of Knowledge*; Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2017, p. 87.

in a distinctive way, put under scrutiny religious education and contextual study and interpretation of Islam in a Western educational and cultural tradition. The focus here is on a system of education in Islam that can offer a contemporary perspective of studies in Islam and the education of Muslims – particularly their religious authorities, and that can work in a worldview and ideological plurality and multicultural environment where Muslim values did not use to have a significant or formative role.

Educational institutions of the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina educate staff to work in the European cultural space and its system of values, although Bosnia and Herzegovina is not yet a member of the European Union but is striving to become one. Although the awareness of this in educational institutions is not prominent and the curriculum has not been defined in this direction, this reality cannot be ignored. A few hundred alumni of the educational institutions of the Islamic Community are already actively working in European and American Muslim communities (*jamaats*); European needs are great and some European countries have already expressed interest in the experiences and models of Bosnian Islamic educational institutions. In the present age and circumstances, the appropriate and best response of Bosnian, and at the same time European, Muslims to the challenges of Islamic education is the development of an Islamic educational concept based on a synthetic and contextual study and interpretation of Islam, primarily in the educational institutions of the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Besides, this concept and its outcomes can in many ways strengthen and positively affect the position of Muslims-Bosniaks within their own country and allow them to be a knowledgeable participant in European debates and solutions for

ILLUSTRATION – Reconstruction done on the basis of the source from 13th century: Al-Ḥarīrī of Basra, *Maqāmāt Al-Ḥarīrī*.

ILUSTRACIJA – Rekonstrukcija urađena na temelju izvora iz 13. stoljeća: Al-Ḥarīrī od Basre, *Maqāmāt Al-Ḥarīrī*.

³ See: Ceric, Mustafa, *A Draft Proposal for the Ghazi Husrev-bey University, Contemporary European Islamic University (GHBUI), 'Centre for Educational Excellence Where East Meets West'*, Appendix 2. In: *The Study of Religion and the Training of Muslim Clergy in Europe: Academic and Religious Freedom in the 21st Century*, edited by Willem B. Drees and Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld. Leiden University Press, 2008, pp. 326-332.

Muslim education. For Bosnian Muslims primarily, this enables taking the position of active producer and provider of a new understanding of Islam that will be able to direct its own community, and strengthen its faith and self-confidence.

The concept of synthesis and synthetic studies in Islam

The focus on synthesis⁴ and synthetic⁵ studies and interpretation of Islam in educational institutions of the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which we discuss here, implies the process of transferring knowledge to the new generation, and interpreting the subject and content of Islamic disciplines using the method of synthesis of the different directions of their historical development and achievements, with an insight into a broader sociopolitical environment of their emergence and growth, and finally drawing conclusions and interpretations for the contemporary context. Synthesis allows the generalization of the individual achievements of each discipline and its separate branches, the active mastering of intellectual tradition as a whole and building new knowledge (new interpretation and understanding) based on superior insight into previous achievements. Besides, synthesis provides the opportunity to obtain the highest-quality extraction from the entirety of the intellectual fruits of previous generations and then incorporate this extraction into new mental and interpretative endeavors. Naturally, all this is preceded by analysis, as a method and process of the scientific breakdown of Islamic intellectual tradition, concepts, propositions and conclusions into their simpler parts, so that the opposite process (synthesis) can yield new general insights free from details that are redundant for this age and unnecessary residue of the time in which they emerged.

Bosniaks' Islamic tradition, particularly Bosniaks' experience over the last three decades, speaks in favor of the importance of such a process in studying Islam at madrasas and Islamic faculties. Viewed historically, Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina received the idea and practice of Islam through the institutions of the Ottoman state during the stage of its full rise on the road to being the leading world empire in various

⁴ Synthesis (Gr. *synthēsis*: putting together, composition) is a procedure by which separate items are joined together in a single and more complex unit; creation of a single mental whole from different individual insights with a new meaning; a path from parts to a whole. Synthesis is a notion opposite to analysis. „Synthesis (Gr. *Sinthesis*), 1) generally: any procedure by which separate particulars are joined together into a unified whole (chemical synthesis, artistic synthesis); 2) psychic (inborn, and experience-based) activity which joins together elements of experience into integral experiences, e.g. individual senses into perceptions, perceptions into notions, and so forth. Experiential wholes achieved by psychic synthesis (which W. Wundt named „creative synthesis“) are always new forms (structures), and they transcend the mere sum of the elements they have been created of (cf. structure); 3) a mental operation, opposite to analysis, which unites concepts of smaller logical scope into logically broader ones (specific to generic), or flow into propositions by means of predication; 4) in mathematical disciplines, a synthetic procedure sometimes pertains to deductively drawn theorems from a few basic definitions and axioms.“ *Filozofijski rječnik*; treće dopunjeno izdanje, Vladimir Filipović (ed.), Matica hrvatska, Zagreb: 1989., p. 302.

⁵ „Synthetic, which creates a synthesis (cf.), which unites, joins, builds, builds upon. In Kant, a synthetic judgment is one in which the predicate is not contained in the subject (as the analytic judgment); rather, it is the very creative act of judgment that gives the subject a new predicate ... In dialectics, synthetic unity overcomes oppositions in a new, higher whole.“ *Filozofijski rječnik*, p. 302.

ILLUSTRATION ~ Gazi Husrev-beg's (Kursumli) Madrasah in Sarajevo (1537); Higher Shariat Judicial School in Sarajevo (1887); Map of the City of Sarajevo from 1738; The Drvenija Madrasah in Sarajevo – women's educational institution (1886).

ILUSTRACIJA ~ Gazi Husrev-begova (Kuršumli) medresa u Sarajevu (1537.); Viša Šerijatska sudačka škola u Sarajevu (1887.); Mapa grada Sarajeva iz 1738.; Drvenija medresa u Sarajevu – ženska odgojno-obrazovna institucija (1886.).

aspects of human activity. This general victorious spirit implied the psychological supremacy of religion. The education of the religious intelligentsia proceeded in schools according to standards sponsored by the powerful state, whose sovereign (**sultan**) embodied both secular and spiritual authority. However, the long period of the stagnation of the Ottoman Empire had negative consequences for religious education as well, as it shared the fate of the country. Previously progressive educational patterns became obsolete and increasingly remained outside the actual substance and needs of life. Both at the time of the rise and that of the decline of the Ottoman Empire, some aspects of Islamic intellectual tradition in the educational system were favored while others were marginalized. Some aspects of the legal sciences, those needed for organizing and leading society, played an important role while, on the other hand, the philosophical tradition remained on the margins. Dervish orders and tekke Sufism enjoyed a certain popularity and social acceptability, while gnosis (**Irfān**), as a highly theoretical and speculative-contemplative dimension of Sufism, did not generate great interest, even in educational institutions. At the same time, in some parts of the Muslim world, in Iran and on the Indian subcontinent, Islamic education proceeded independently of the Ottoman pattern and was focused on other areas of the religion.

When the Ottomans left Bosnia, the old pattern remained prominent and prevailed in the Bosnian

educational and religious system for a long time. In the new age, after the Austro-Hungarian occupation in 1878, religious connections with Istanbul, though weakened, were inter alia maintained through people who went to schools in Istanbul and through the inherited Ottoman educational structure.⁶ Moreover, the first five raisu-l-ulas of the Islamic Community, who served as raisu-l-ulas from 1882 to 1936, received their education in Istanbul.⁷ The first modern school after Austro-Hungarian occupation, the Shari school for sharia judges (*Mekteb-i-nuvvab*), was opened in Sarajevo in 1887 and was aimed at educating kadis judges for applying the sharia law in Muslims' personal affairs within the Austro-Hungarian public law. In its religious segment, it relied upon the Ottoman tradition and its teachers were mostly educated trained in this tradition.⁸

ILLUSTRATION - *Diploma of Higher Studies (university education) Dr. Mustafa Cerić from al-Azhar University in Cairo in 1298.*
 ILUSTRACIJA - *Diploma visokih studija (univerzitetsko obrazovanje) dr. Mustafe Cerića sa Univerziteta al-Azhar u Kairu 1298. godine.*

⁶ For more, see: Hajrudin Ćurić, *Muslimansko školstvo u Bosni Hercegovini do 1918. godine*; Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1983.

⁷ Raisu-l-ulama Mustafa Hilmi-efendija Hadžiomerović (1882-1893), raisu-l-ulama Mehmed Teufik ef. Azabagić (1893-1909), raisu-l-ulama hafiz Sulejman ef. Šarac (1910-1912), raisu-l-ulama Mehmed Džemaludin ef. Čaušević (1913-1930) and raisu-l-ulama hafiz Ibrahim ef. Maglajlić (1930-1936) received their higher religious education in Istanbul. In addition, Salih Safvet Bašić, who served as raisu-l-ulama (naibu reis) twice, first from 1936 to 1938 and then from 1942 to 1947, received his secondary and higher education in Istanbul. For raisu-l-ulama of the Islamic Community. See: Ferhat Šeta, *Reisu-l-uleme u Bosni i Hercegovini i Jugoslaviji*; Sarajevo: 1990.

⁸ See more about courses and teachers of this school in: *Spomenica Šeriatske sudačke škole u Sarajevu – izdana prilikom pedesetogodišnjice ovoga zavoda 1887-1937*; Sarajevo: Islamska dionička štamparija, 1937.

After the fall of the caliphate in 1924 and the change in the character of the Turkish state, Cairo and Al-Azhar University became an important source of Islamic teaching training for Bosnian 'ulamā' (scholars), who brought the new, at the time reforming, ideas of Jamāluddīn Afghānī, Muḥammad Abduh, Rashīd Riḍā and others.⁹ It marked the beginning of a period of gradual decline of the domination of the Ottoman educational model among the Bosniak scholars. Cairo-educated scholars gained recognition and began to take significant positions in the Islamic community and educational system, while the popularity of Al-Azhar University, as an authoritative religious college, significantly increased among Bosnian Muslims over the following decades.

In 1937, the Shari school for sharia judges was raised to the level of a faculty and named the Higher Islamic Shari-Theological School. Besides *kadis* (judges), it was also intended for educating theologians. By the time this school was closed in 1945, its alumni had included a great number of *alims* (scholars) and Muslim intellectuals who had a significant role in preserving and maintaining the continuity of Islamic educational thought and Muslim identity until the establishment of the Islamic Theological Faculty in Sarajevo in 1977. Between 1945 and 1977 there was no Islamic higher-education institution in Bosnia, and *imams* (guides) and *hatibs* (preachers) were educated in Gazi-Husrevbey's madrasa, which was ranked as a secondary school.

However, due to the lack of local higher-education institutions, in the 1970s a certain number of Bosnian students completed their Islamic studies in Cairo or Baghdad, or in Maghreb countries (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia). This was later followed by sporadic education at universities in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.¹⁰

Still, the establishment of the Islamic Theological Faculty in Sarajevo in 1977, which was renamed the Faculty of Islamic Studies in 1992, provided minimum prerequisites, allowing for the Islamic Community and Bosniaks-Muslims to design their own educational policy, though in very confined and restricted conditions due to strong state supervision and control.¹¹ The opening of the Islamic Theological Faculty decreased the need for studying at universities in Muslim countries. However, due to the aggression against Bosnian independent state, the almost four-year long brutal war and the consequences of the war, a significant number of Bosnian students, some constrained by the war conditions, continued their studies in Muslim countries, particularly in the Middle East countries, Turkey and, for the first time, in Malaysia and Iran.

This fragmentary overview of Islamic educational tradition in the Islamic Community in Bosnia and

⁹ The most comprehensive study on Bosniaks at Al-Azhar to date was written by Prof. Dr. Jusuf Ramić. See: Jusuf Ramić, *Bošnjaci na El-Azheru*; Sarajevo: Rijaset Islamske zajednice u Bosni i Hercegovini, 1997. Three more recent raisu-l-ulamas were also educated at Al-Azhar; raisul-l-ulama Jakub ef. Selimoski (1991-1993), raisu-l-ulama Dr. Mustafa Cerić (1993-2012) and the current raisu-l-ulama Dr. Husein ef. Kavazović.

¹⁰ Unfortunately, there is not yet a comprehensive study of the number of Bosnian students and the character of their education in individual Muslim countries, or a joint study which would comprehensively and thoroughly research and evaluate the issue of education of Bosnian scholars in Muslim countries.

¹¹ Graduates from Al-Azhar made up a significant share of the first professors at the Faculty of Islamic Studies. The first composition of teaching staff included Al-Azhar alumni: Husein Đozo, Ahmed Smajlović, Ibrahim Trebinjac, Jusuf Ramić. See: Hilmo Neimarlija, *Vrijeme utemeljenja i utemeljitelji – Fakultet islamskih nauka Univerziteta u Sarajevu 1977-2017*; Sarajevo: Fakultet islamskih nauka, El-Kalem, 2017, p. 45.

Herzegovina serves to elaborate on the view that educational institutions of the Islamic Community should primarily focus on developing their own synthetic interpretative and educational practice.¹² Indeed, approaches to education in any Muslim country are guided by its national interests and needs, including the organization of Islamic universities. Educational policies are inseparable from state interests and the degree of the cultural development of the society. Every country pays close attention to the way in which it educates the nation and to the profile and orientation of teaching staff, and keeps watch over the pedagogical area. Besides, it is important to keep in mind the rigidity and authoritarianism of the regimes that manage traditional Islamic education centers, and the political abuse of religion as a means to remain in power and subject Islamic education, among other things, to such goals and ideological orientations.

On the other hand, sociopolitical, cultural and worldview conditions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Europe are completely different from those in Muslim countries; therefore, they cannot follow the same educational model or directly transfer it. Besides, the Islamic educational concepts in different Muslim countries are to a great extent mutually opposed, specifically or ideologically colored rather than inclusive, focused on a one-sided and frequently selective interpretation of Islam, and their „raw“ adoption and „transplantation“ in this form in this region would inevitably lead to tensions. Some useful lessons in this respect can be learned from the recent Bosnian experience. During the aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina and at the turn of the century a great number of students returned to Bosnia from various Muslim countries. They brought with them the educational approach to interpreting Islam characteristic of these countries, which led to fierce and mostly meaningless debates on the propriety of the Bosnian Islamic tradition and the authenticity of its concept. This tough confrontation of different Muslim educational traditions and ideological approaches to religion, aimed at imposing the validity of a single and foreign concept in its unrefined form was traumatic and, ultimately, harmful for a small Muslim community such as that in Bosnia, and for its tradition if it were to be maintained. The Bosnian context and tradition cannot properly absorb and endure it in the long term. Guided by this recent experience, it is not wise to allow Bosnia to become a „battlefield“ of different concepts of educational systems which are mutually exclusive and conflicting. Naturally, the gratitude for allowing Bosnian Muslims to use Muslim educational institutions in the world at the time of a lack in their own, and thus strengthen the continuity of their knowledge of Islam does not imply servility and abandoning our own quest for what allows for progress and authenticity in the European environment.

¹² One must bear in mind that Bosnian Muslims, although their high religious authorities were to a great extent educated outside Bosnia and Herzegovina, developed their educational institutions based on their own needs and the circumstances in which they operated. Numerous substantial reforms were carried out in maktabs (Primary Islamic Schools) and madrasas (Secondary Islamic Grammar School), many discussions of Islamic education in Bosnia and Herzegovina were held and significant results were achieved in this respect. In this area, Muslims acted completely independently of any Muslim educational policy in the world, designed curricula, wrote textbooks and defined the content, objectives and outcomes of their educational system. It was not a concept of mere imitation or dependence on the impact of a foreign educational system; however, there was a lack of full freedom in designing their own educational concept due to the direct interference of state systems in educational concepts, or to poor economic capacities for significant investments into or reform of the Muslim educational system.

ILUSTRACIJA – Rekonstrukcija urađena na temelju izvora: Mīr Ḥusain al-Ḥusainī Maḥmūd Al-Muzahhib, *Tiraniya učitelja je bolja od ljubavi oca* (Iz *Gulistana* pjesnika šejha Mušlih al-Dīna Sa'dija). Buhara oko 1560.

ILLUSTRATION – Reconstruction done on the basis of the source: Mīr Ḥusain al-Ḥusainī Maḥmūd Al-Muzahhib, *The Tyranny of Teacher Is Better Than The Love of Father* (From the *Gulistān* of the poet Shaykh Muṣṭafī al-Dīn Sa'dī). Bukhara c. 1560.

A crucial feature of Islam and its message, which has historically been proved many times, is its ability to adapt in diverse cultural and civilizational contexts. The diversity of language and cultural forms is both highly recognized in the Divine text („O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another.“)¹³ and is given supreme legitimacy because Allah Almighty communicates His message in the language and culture of the people He addresses. God’s messengers brought the Revelation in the language of the people they addressed and originated from the environment where they proclaimed faith; they were authentic experts in the cultural, spiritual and intellectual tradition in which they were active („And We did not send any messenger except [speaking] in the language of his people to state clearly for them..“)¹⁴. Thus, the Bosnian 'ulamā' (scholars) and the Bosnian educational system, adhering to this direction of Qur’an instruction, have an obligation to interpret the Divine message and communicate it in a language and cultural form which is understandable and suitable for contemporary man. Since there are different languages and different cultural forms in the world, discourse about Islam cannot be identical in each environment, since due to this verbal identity it will not be recognizable, understandable or accepted in different cultural forms and languages, regardless of the evident need for faith and spirituality in every culture and language.¹⁵ Muslims have never been strangers to the search for this harmonization and fruitful encounter, since they have often endeavored to harmonize the message of Islam with existing cultures and to discern the original ideas of God’s message in former religious traditions, considering themselves to be heirs of the entire idea of monotheism.

The search for an open and dynamic concept, as well as an aligning with the current cultural and technological development of humanity is ultimately aimed at making the Bosnian Islamic educational system capable of appropriately defining the phenomena and processes in its environment and on this basis producing a new and authentic understanding of Islam, rather than being a consumer of someone else’s knowledge and understanding. It requires the creation of new multi-perspective and pluralistic areas and scientific disciplines that arise from our own needs and care for the wellbeing of humanity. Furthermore, the fact that the educational system and work of the Islamic Community is experiencing an inflow of different traditions of the interpretation of Islam and education in religion from the Muslim world through Bosnian student-returnees should be made use of creatively, i.e. this knowledge and these traditions should be intellectually and rationally juxtaposed within Bosnian experience and tradition; they should be discussed to

¹³ *Qur'an*, 49:13.

¹⁴ *Qur'an*, 14:4.

¹⁵ Forms and shapes of religiosity in the modern age are very changeable and fluid, which can lead to false conclusions about the rise or decline of religiosity. Peter Berger established that nowadays the world is probably as religious as it used to be, if not more so; however, this religiosity is not manifested in the same way and is not shaped the same as before. A decrease in loyalty to traditional religious communities and a decrease in participation in common rites or membership in the hierarchized religious organizations are not a reliable indicator of the decline of religiosity. Berger corrected his previous belief that modernization necessarily leads to decline in religiosity. Instead of their expected disappearance, religions increasingly come to the center of political and public happenings and show their vitality.

Peter Berger, *The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview*; in: *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*; Peter Berger (ed.), Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1999, pp. 1-18.

produce new insights and interpretations, rather than merely adopted or selected from those already offered. This productive polemical mingling of perspectives, of different interpretative contents, combined with the Bosnian experience and European context, will yield new insights inspired by the primordial spirit and meaning of the message of Islam. In this way the potential structural weakness, as the presence of a multitude of educational concepts of religion may seem, can actually turn into a creative opportunity and advantage. The transplantation and separate growth of individual trees of knowledge, which have no mutual touching point, is not in the interest of Bosnian Muslims. However, if these trees are mutually grafted, they can yield a unique fruit consisting of all the sound and hearty juices in a new bond and compound.¹⁶ It is therefore important for the diverse 'ulamā' (scholars) and academic staff to communicate, gather, work together and intellectually and spiritually grow in a sound and powerful interaction through dialogue. Educational institutions are the best and most suitable point for doing so.¹⁷

In addition, the Bosnian and European context of teachings on Islam should primarily be guided by the orientation to present Islam as a universal message that offers meaning to every man, regardless of his background, religion, race and culture. Particularity, selectivity, and a sectarian approach are enemies of universality. By its character and essence, the message of Islam is a universal and ultimate Divine idea of good for all people. Compared to all other religions, inclusiveness is the most prominent feature of Islam, since it accepts all God's messengers and sees itself as a faith that preserves the fundamental idea of monotheism from the first man until today. It is an exceptional opportunity for Islam and Muslims. In his discussion of Islamic philosophy, Seyyed Hossein Nasr points out that classical Muslim philosophers saw the Greek legacy partly as prophetic and without much hesitation integrated it into the Islamic perspective, since they believed it to be a prophetic, or inspired revelation, and Nasr therefore advocates a new interpretation of Islamic philosophy,

¹⁶ This does not imply abandoning one's own tradition and methodology or a new form of syncretism and taking something from various Muslim legal, theological or spiritual denominations. Indeed, it is about an open and critical attitude toward the entire Islamic tradition, which is explored in the framework of the contemporary Bosnian and European context using the criteria of one's own tradition and experience of Islamic living, so that new universal meanings and neglected messages can be discovered in it. Thus, different Islamic educational concepts are stripped in the Bosnian context and freed from the diverse conditions and determinants of the place, time and circumstances of their emergence, and their „stripped“ essence is adjusted to the new environment to provide it with the power of inspiring and productively leading and spiritually directing the Muslim community, in line with our own tradition.

¹⁷ Sardar analyzes the rationale and scope of the project „Islamization of Knowledge“, which was promoted by the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) and Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, who, in the second half of the 20th century realized that the modern educational system, transferred and imposed by the West, was corrosive to the value system of Muslim societies. The effects and products of westernized universities in Muslim countries were often poor counterparts of their western contemporaries and seldom contributed to the positive development of their own countries. Sardar claims that the „Islamization of Knowledge“ project was a product of its time and context, and has left its heritage; however, nowadays it is necessary to move from „Islamization of Knowledge“ to a discourse on „Integration of Knowledge“, as an ongoing multi-generational endeavor, rather than simply a one-time effort, to create new paradigms of the formation of knowledge rooted in the intellectual history and tradition of Islam.

See: Sardar, Henzell-Thomas, *Rethinking Reform in Higher Education*, pp. 88-140.

The quest for a new paradigm of the „Integration of Knowledge“ in Muslim societies focuses on the entire knowledge, particularly on the reassessment of the entire Muslim intellectual tradition and rethinking the present concept and basis of social studies, humanities and science in Muslim countries. However, the focus of this paper is far narrower, since it discusses religious studies as a fairly homogenous area of science with similar methods and sources, which seem suitable for synthesis and a synthetic approach, and which are likely to produce faster positive effects. Discourse on the „Integration of Knowledge“ actually reveals that Islamic education has certain difficulties in the contemporary environment and that it has to find a new paradigm, which has been considered by many Muslim intellectuals around the world for a long time already.

since the „challenges of Western science require the authentic Islamic interpretation of the history of Islamic philosophy to be presented in the modern language while remaining faithful to the Islamic view of philosophy and its origin.“¹⁸ The contemporary message of Islam as a whole asks for a new authentic interpretation in the modern language, which will highlight its inclusiveness and universal character. Traditional knowledge and interpretations are not truly useful if they cannot be passed on to a new generation and give meaning to it. The true question may be what knowledge is for and what kind of knowledge it is if it cannot be passed on and fruitfully accepted in a new generation. The task of educational institutions is to transfer knowledge from one generation to another and thus fulfill this obligation. Muhammad Assad warns that the later, even current generations of Muslims, in their understanding of faith, have been satisfied with the thinking and views of great Muslim scholars of the first centuries of Islam, without making the effort to understand the sources of Islam (Qur'an and Sunnah) by themselves and, based on their own understanding of these sources, re-interpret the world around them. These Muslims stop at the views of early generations of Muslim scholars and do not attempt to go further, to the very sources of faith, i.e. to gain their own understanding of the sources of Islam and reconsider the teachings and solutions of former Muslim scholars. In this way, the views of former scholars become an obstacle for fathoming the primordial message and intentions of the Qur'an and Sunnah in any age, while the views of former generations assume the function of mediator, and even of an obstacle. For Asad, later *taqlid*, following and imitating the views of other scholars, without reviewing the evidence on which they built their views, is „an antithesis to a Muslim's duty of thinking and reflecting which is so unambiguously stressed in Qur'an.“¹⁹

The educational concept which is advocated here, autonomous reassessment and synthesis of the entire intellectual tradition of Islam in Bosnian Islamic educational institutions, inevitably leads to a critical analysis of the discourse on Islam both in the East and in the West. It is evident that certain interpretations of Islam in Muslim countries have essentially been a means for maintaining political power, i.e. that discourse on Islam is in fact a part or extension of the discourse of state power, while Western discourse is still burdened with stereotypes and islamophobia. The Bosnian Islamic educational model is presently free from the discourse of power imposed by the state or any ideology, unless it itself gets entangled in administrative-bureaucratic restrictions and voluntarily becomes a servant to the discourse of power beyond itself.²⁰ A critical analysis of the already existing Western and Eastern discourses on Islam is crucial, while potentially diverging analytical-critical

¹⁸ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamska filozofija od postanka do danas*; Tuzla: Centar za kulturu i edukaciju, Logos, 2018, p. 115.

¹⁹ Muhammad Asad, *This Law of Ours and Other Essays*; Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2001, p. 54.

²⁰ On educational models for the education of imams in Europe, and on the model of the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina see: Ahmet Alibašić, *Obrazovanje imama i islamskih teologa u Evropi*; Novi Muallim, godina XX, no. 78, 2019, pp. 20-29.

²¹ „People differ in the amount of information, whether it is information in the area of Shariah companions or other“, writes Salman al-Ouda, pointing out that it was the reason for the disagreement among God's messengers, the most respectable Sahabah of Muhammad (peace be upon him), the four imams, and others. „This disagreement is essentially grace and broadness, and the problem arises when it begins to include passion, personal

opinions among 'ulamā' (scholars) guided by scientific motives and honesty and benevolent discussion and exchange of views aimed at understanding one's own position and meaning of life in the world, can ultimately be the grace of encounter.²¹

A comprehensive synthetic educational concept excludes superficiality and selectivity. Drawing conclusions about a whole based on an insight only into a part carries the risk of fundamental error. There is a famous Rumi parable about the elephant.²² In this multifaceted parable Rumi vividly suggests that drawing conclusions and the interpretation of facts must be based on the clarification and awareness of the whole of an object. Awareness of one or more parts does not give a proper image of the whole. The object must be brought to the light of awareness. On the other hand, the means of cognition have to be appropriate; a touch of the palm in pitch-darkness is one of the cognitive tools, but the palm cannot grasp the elephant's whole body. Each man touched the same object (elephant), but on its different parts and got a different cognition. Although the cognition of the touched part was correct, the conclusion about the whole was false. Excellent knowledge of individual streams of thought within a single Muslim environment, or of a single educational concept, is not sufficient for drawing proper conclusions about the whole of Islamic thinking or educational concepts. This is where we get help from synthesis, which is reached when the whole is illuminated.

Another Rumi parable is helpful for comprehending the contemporary cacophony pertaining to Islam, including that on education, both in the East and in the West.²³ A poor Persian, Arab, Turk and Greek, says Rumi, quarreled about how to spend one dirhem given to them; they each wanted to buy grapes, but expressed their desire in their own language. Although they all wanted the same thing, as they could not understand each other they began a quarrel that turned into a fight. A wise man who knew all these languages was able to fulfill each one's wish for the same money, i.e. by buying grapes, and thus eliminate the cause of the quarrel and conflict.

interests and unacceptable behavior, which turn it into a kind of split, argument and conflict among Muslims. When a man wrote a book and brought it to imam Ahmed, saying: 'I entitled this book The Book of Disagreement', Ahmed told him, 'Don't entitle it the Book of Disagreement, but rather the Book of Broadness!' This shows his understanding. A scholar said of Sahabah: 'Their consensus is an irrefutable proof, and their disagreement is a vast grace.' Umar ibn Abdul Aziz says: 'I swear by Allah, I would not have rejoiced if Sahabah had not disagreed, since if they had agreed about everything, disagreement with them would have been a delusion. However, since they did disagree, each opinion is a Sunnah and it gives space.' Selman el-Avde, *Kultura razilaženja*; in: *Zajednica srednjeg puta: teorija i praksa islamske umjerenosti*, Sarajevo: El-Kalem i Centar za dijalog – Vesatijja, 2013, p. 319.

²² The parable can be found in the third volume of Muhammad Jalalu'ddin Rumi's *Mathnawi* starting from verse 1259. It explains that a Hindu brought an elephant and put it in a dark house. Many people came to see the large creature. As seeing it with the eye was impossible, narrates Rumi, each one was feeling it in the dark with the palm of his hand. The hand of one fell on its trunk, and he said that this creature was like a water-pipe. The hand of another touched its ear and he said that to him it appeared to be like a fan. The third person touched its leg and said he found the elephant's shape to be like a pillar. Another laid his hand on the elephant's back and said: „Truly, this elephant is like a throne“. Everybody described it according to what he touched. Their statements differed, and if „there had been a candle in each one's hand, the difference would have gone out of their words“. Rumi concludes that the eye of sense-perception is only like the palm of the hand: the palm does not have the power to reach the whole of the elephant. See: Karim Zamani, *Sharh-e Jame' Masnavi-ye Maanavi*; Volume 3, Entesharat Ettela'at, Tehran, 1377, pp. 313-315.

²³ The parable about a quarrel of four men who wanted to buy grapes for a common dirhem can be found in the second volume of *Mathnawi* starting from verse 3681 and narrates that a certain man gave a dirhem to four beggars. One of them said in Persian that he wanted to buy grapes, the second said angrily in Arabic that he didn't agree, that he would rather buy 'inab (grapes), while the third, a Turk, said: „This money is mine, and I don't want 'inab, I want only uzum!“ Then the fourth, a Greek by origin, said: „Stop this talk, friends: I want istafil.“ And these people began fighting in contention with one another, because they were unaware of the hidden meaning of the names. In their folly and ignorance they smote each other

ILUSTRACIJA - Dželaludin Rumi, Mevlana: *Mesnevi*, 1663. godine.: Poznata priča iz *Masnavi ma'navi* (duhovna pjesma) Dželaludina Rumija koja je naslovljena kao "Slon u mračnoj sobi". (Rekonstrukcija) Detaljnije, vidi fusnotu br. 22.

ILUSTRACIJE DESNO: Naslovna stranica jednog od poglavlja *Mesnevi* s iluminiranim zaglavljem; Portret Dželaludina Rumija, Mevlane.

ILLUSTRATION ~ Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, Maulana: *Maṣnavī-i ma'navī*, 1663. A well-known story of the *Masnavi ma'navi* (Spiritual Poem) of the Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī is entitled „The Elephant in the Dark Room“. (Reconstruction) See footnote no. 22.

ILLUSTRATIONS RIGHT: Title page of one of the chapters *Maṣnavī-i ma'navī* with an illuminated header; Portrait Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, Maulana.

To eliminate the current meaningless arguments and overcome „verbal fights“ about the marginal and the particular, it is necessary to focus on understanding the essence of the message of Islam adjusted to the contemporary context, by taking into account the whole, and the language in which it will be expressed. Now more than ever, the message of Islam needs a universal language that transcends the selective and ideological languages of national and local borders and interests, and a sage who understands and can express it.

Contextual approach

the second essential aspect of interpreting Islam in educational institutions of the Islamic Community is the contextual approach, i.e. the awareness of the broader social context in which the Divine Message should be implemented, to make it not merely normative and formative for Muslims, but a message to every man of visible hope and serenity; a message of spiritual growth, and of conscious and free choice, among all the other messages that modern man is encountering. In other words, to produce a new knowledge of faith that will be significant in the actual context and circumstances of the society's real life.

For Bosnian Islamic educational institutions, this is primarily the European context, where the religious and profane spheres are separated increasingly less clearly and rigorously, where the profane and the religious mingle and coexist in their differences, transcending the previous dividing lines. „Over the last 20 to 30 years, borders between the spiritual and secular have become blurred and religions can affect public discourse even on issues that could not be discussed before.“²⁴ Consequently, as opposed to topics it dealt with in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Bosnian Islamic education in the contemporary European context is faced with the need to find proper answers to the challenges of materialistic philosophy and culture, secularism and post-secularism, virtual reality and networked society, and to question its own positions within the „multiple modernities“²⁵ of the contemporary world, as well as to develop credible principles for dialogue with atheists,

with their fists, says Rumi and he goes on to say that if a master of the esoteric had been there, a revered and multi-lingual man, he would have pacified them and he would have said: „With this one dirhem I will give all of you what you wish. When without deceit you surrender your hearts to me, this dirhem will do all this for you. Your one dirhem will become four; four enemies will become one through unanimity. What each of you says produces strife and separation; what I say brings you agreement.“ See: Zamani, Sharh-e Jame', Volume 2, pp. 877 – 879.

²⁴ Silvio Ferrari, *Religija u evropskim javnim prostorima: pravni pregled*; Context: Časopis za interdisciplinarne studije, year 1, no. 2, 2014, Centar za napredne studije, p. 10.

²⁵ „Multiple modernities“ is a term promoted by Israeli sociologist Shmuel Eisenstadt challenging the prevailing proposition that modernization implies the „Westernization“ of non-Western societies. Developing countries and post-colonial countries have their own patterns of modernization, which do not necessarily correspond to Western patterns, which are even anti-Western, but they cannot be considered anti-modern. Modernism is not uniform, but rather a sum of heterogeneous, dynamic and pluralist, multiple processes and cultural programs that essentially question the symbolic and institutional assumptions of Western countries. Modernization has encompassed a large part of the world, though it has not led to the emergence of a single civilization or a single cultural form; rather, in Asia and Latin America one can observe the emergence of several modern patterns that develop differently. S. N. Eisenstadt, „Multiple Modernities“, *Daedalus*, vol. 129, no. 1, (Winter, 2000), pp. 1-29, The MIT Press on behalf of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences Stable, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20027613>, accessed on: 20. 02. 2020. From an Islamic perspective, it is necessary to have a proper response to each of these patterns of modernity and incorporate the spiritual potential of Islamic message in it.

agnostics and many other worldviews.²⁶ At the level of societal daily life, the most important challenge for the Muslim scholars, besides inter-religion dialogue, is a dialogue with agnostics and atheists, facing arguments of unbelief and agnostic humanism, and cooperation with various social players aimed at preserving common-sense ethics and fundamental ethical values. It implies the „translation“ of values from one's own tradition into the secular and public language of the society, keeping in mind that some misunderstandings and reductions may arise in the „translation“ process.²⁷ In such societies, Islamic thought and tradition should find their place and function, and find the inner strength and ability for dialogue encounters and the testing of strength, for informed confrontation and agreement.

In *Contributions for the History of Islamic Thought in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, Enes Karić claims that one of the characteristics of Islamic thought in Bosnia and Herzegovina was adjustment. „We believe that central to Islamic thinking of Bosnian Muslims in the late 19th and in the 20th century was the *issue of adjusting to Europe* and European civilization patterns. Therefore, one can rightly say that Bosnian Muslims' Islamic thinking was subject to *multiple processes of adjustment*. The Islamic and Muslim thinker adjusts himself and his faith or, better put, its interpretation, to the new age.“²⁸ Nowadays, however, this adjustment must not be a mere and inferior imitation of context or pliable endeavor to become appealing to context at the expense of the essence of the message of Islam and Muslim identity.²⁹ Instead of inferiority and imitation, it is necessary to make Bosnian Muslim society capable of refining any context with its own values and of processing it through its own tradition, since it is only in this way that it will feel comfortable and

²⁶ „What were the discussions about? What school should we have? What clothes to wear? What cap to put on our head? Can a Muslim wear a hat? Can a Muslim woman show her face and throw away burka and hijab? Should we have modern schools? Should we send female children to modern schools? Can a Muslim woman be socially engaged? Are Muslims allowed to emigrate to Turkey and can it be considered as Hijra? What about old Muslim cemeteries in Bosnia and can they be used for residential construction, parks, roads? How to organize the waqf system? Is the bank interest rate the same as *al-ribā*, which is described in the Qur'an, and is a Muslim allowed to deal with a bank? Has the Caliphate been abolished forever, and should Muslims have a Caliphate? These and many similar questions preoccupied Islamic and Muslim thinkers in Bosnia and Herzegovina from the late 19th to the beginning of the second half of the 20th century and, to a lesser degree, later on as well.“

Enes Karić, *Islamski reformistički pokreti kod Bošnjaka (pregled bosanskih muslimanskih rasprava za i protiv obnove i reforme u XX stoljeću)*; in: *Zbornik radova Naučnog skupa „Islamska tradicija Bošnjaka: izvori, razvoj i institucije, perspektive“*, 14, 15, and 16 November 2007, Rijaset Islamske zajednice u Bosni i Hercegovini, Sarajevo, 2008, pp. 338-339.

²⁷ The German philosopher Jürgen Habermas believes that it is necessary to „translate“ religious language in the public space in a secular country to be neutral in terms of worldview. Indeed, believers and religious communities in a secular country must be capable of translating their religious beliefs, their views and their justification into a language that will be understandable and suitable for the public discourse. A mutually understandable language is necessary, i.e. it is necessary to find a common language in resolving secular problems, and the translation of religious beliefs into a secular language makes religious arguments more likely to receive agreement by the general public.

²⁸ Enes Karić, *Prilozi za povijest islamskog mišljenja u Bosni i Hercegovini u XX stoljeću*; volume 1, (Sarajevo: El-Kalem, 2004), p. 38.

²⁹ A century after the period discussed by Dr. Karić, a lot of attention and contradictory responses in the Bosnian public followed a statement, made at the opening ceremony on the occasion of a re-constructed mosque in Herzegovina in 2008 by Raisu-l-ulama Mustafa Cerić, who said: „Why should we adjust to anybody, let them adjust to us, we have had enough of adjustment. Now is the time for them to adjust to us.“ A certain ambiguity can be discerned in this statement. On the one hand, the statement suggests the awareness of what Karić describes as „adjustment of Islamic thinking“ to the European context, which lasted throughout the 20th century and which, at the end of the century, still did not save Bosniaks from suffering and genocide. On the other hand, it points to the heightened new awareness and the need to seek their own path, rather than merely adjust, which is essentially an inferior position and vegetative state. It can be claimed that it is a request for exiting the stage of adjustment and entering the stage of *promotion* and full or ultimate *recognition*.

authentic. Fikret Karčić made the useful observation that the reasons for the limited scope of the Tanzimat reforms in the Ottoman Empire of the mid-20th century, besides the oppositional activity of Muslims toward the implementation of the reforms and the political resistance of non-Muslims, can be found in the way in which they were initiated. „The Tanzimat reforms did not begin with the attempt to change the traditional mindset of the Ottoman state Muslims in aiming to prepare them for facing challenges of modern times. Rather, Ottoman modernists began to directly borrow the European characteristics of modernity and transplant them into the Ottoman milieu. This approach led to the alienation of the Ottoman elite from common Muslims, and it did not fully satisfy non-Muslims either.“³⁰ If it is not in line with the context in which it will be implemented, the quality of knowledge and education will not yield the desired results. Ziauddin Sardar uses the example of the Indians' refusal to accept the offer by the government of Virginia for the schooling of a certain number of their sons, despite its good intentions, since the Indians rightly estimated that a Virginian education was not suitable for them, and concludes that this refusal and this choice did not save the Indians and their culture from colonialism and submission. Sardar adds that later on, Muslims acted in a similar way, knowing that the concept of Western education did not correspond to their concept of living and their long educational tradition; however, neither the Indians nor Muslims could help themselves by ignoring the actual state of affairs. The difference in power brought Indians to extinction, and Muslims to submission.³¹

Knowledge, particularly in the area of social studies and humanities, is contextual and inseparable from the social, cultural, intellectual and political environment and conditions in the community in which it develops. If it strives to be relevant, Islamic education, in order to work in the European context, must inevitably focus on studying the key questions of the European environment and provide satisfying answers to them. We know, from the Qur'an text, that context provokes even God's direct response and intervention. In Tafsir science one can find chapters on the motives for proclaiming some **Qur'an ayahs** (sentences) and **suras** (chapters). They clearly point out which actual events or circumstances were the motive for proclaiming these **ayahs** (sentences),

³⁰ Fikret Karčić, *Bošnjaci i izazovi modernosti: kasni osmanlijski i habsburšku period*; Sarajevo: El-Kalem, 2004, p. 155.

³¹ „At the 1744 Treaty of Lancaster, in Pennsylvania, between the Government of Virginia and the Six Nations, the Commissioners from Virginia, motivated to improve the conditions of the indigenous people, expressed their wish to establish a Fund for Educating Indians youth at Williamsburg College. If the Six Nations would send down half a dozen of their lads to our college, the Government spokesman said, we would provide for them and ensure that they are educated in the ways of the modern world. The Indian spokesman thought for a moment, and then replied: *We know that you highly esteem the kind of learning taught in those Colleges, and the maintenance of our young men, while with you, would be very expensive for you. We are convinced, therefore, that you mean to do us good by your proposal, and we thank you heartily. But you, who are wise, must know that different nations have different conceptions of things; and you will therefore not take it amiss, if our ideas of this kind of education happen not to be the same as yours. We have had some experience of it. Several of our young people were formerly brought up at the Colleges of the Northern Provinces; they were instructed in all your sciences, but, when they came back to us, they were bad runners, ignorant of every means of living in the woods, unable to bear either cold or hunger, knew neither to build a cabin, take a deer, or kill an enemy, spoke our language imperfectly, were therefore neither fit for hunters, warriors, nor counsellors. They were totally good for nothing. We are however not the less obliged by your kind offer, though we decline accepting it. And to show our grateful sense of it, if the gentlemen of Virginia will send us a dozen of their sons, we will take care of their education, instruct them in all we know, and make men of them.*“ Sardar, Henzell-Thomas, *Rethinking Reform in Higher Education*; pp. 103-104. Sardar adds, on p. 159, that the Indian spokesman's words were reported by Benjamin Franklin, in *Remarks concerning the savages of North America*; London, 1784; quoted by Thomas Lambo, *Relevance of Western education to developing countries*; Teilhard Review 2 (1), pp. 2-4 (1976).

and which actual issues they resolved. The Divine Revelation does not ignore context; on the contrary, it shows its great importance. Besides, Muslim intellectual tradition inherits the practice of the application of faith in context; today's Muslims are heirs to the tradition of prominent thinkers who integrated high achievements in religious studies and science. Nasr observes that in the classical period of Islamic civilization Muslim philosophers were actually philosopher-scientists; they did not only philosophize, nor were they involved only in mental speculation; on the contrary, they also had a sound knowledge of the sciences.³² At present, Bosnian Muslims need 'ulamā'-culturologists, 'ulamā'-anthropologists, 'ulamā'-comparativists, „'ulamā'-Europeologists“, „'ulamā'-Occidentalists“ in the broadest sense, in the way that 'ulamā' admirably combine theological knowledge with an in-depth knowledge of contemporary Western social, cultural, technical studies and science. With such a synthesis, the Muslim educational system can articulate Muslim needs and worldview in an authentic and promising manner, and promote the universal and inclusive message of Islam. Discussing the reform of Muslim education, Ziauddin Sardar refers to Etienne Wenger, according to whom learning, as cited, „is not acquiring skills and information; it is becoming a certain person – a knower in a context where what it means to know is negotiated with respect to the regime of competence of a community.“³³ The term „knower in a context“ seems to be very useful. The fact is that Muslims presently have many knowers and 'ulamā' (scholars) beyond context; with a rich knowledge of Islam, but beyond the contemporary context. Consequently, there has long been a strong and pressing need for the educational system to profile context-'ulamā' (scholars), 'ulamā' (the Muslim scholars) of context, knowers who possess both the religious knowledge and the authoritative knowledge of context.

ILUSTRACIJA – Ḥusām al-Dīn Chelebī: Detail from the illustrations *A Samāc During the Leadership of Rūmī's Successor*, Iraq, Baghdad 1590s.
 ILLUSTRATION – Ḥusām al-Dīn Chelebī: Detalj sa ilustracije *Rukovođenje Samāc-a – nasljednika Rumija* (Mevlevi madresa), Irak, Bagdad 1590-ih.

³² „This combination of philosophy with jurisprudence and other religious studies is an interesting phenomenon which differs from what can be observed in former Islamic history. Former famous philosophers such as Al-Kindī, Al-Fārābī, Al-Āmirī and Ibn Sinā knew something about jurisprudence and other religious studies, but no one except Ibn Rushd was considered an authority on this topic. Indeed, they were mostly scientists, and many were involved in practical medicine, such as Rāzī and Ibn Sinā. From Tūsī on, we see philosophers who were also theologians, lawyers or both, which we could see earlier in this book. However, until the establishment of Isfahan School, many philosophers still remained scientists as well; Tūsī Ghiyāth al-Dīn Dashtakī, Shams al-Dīn Khafī and Faṭḥ Allah Shirāzī are some of them.“
 Nasr, *Islamska filozofija od postanka do danas*; p. 254.

³³ Etienne Wenger: *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity. Learning in Doing: Social, Cognitive and Computational Perspectives*; Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, quoted in: Sardar, Henzell-Thomas, *Rethinking Reform*, 2008, p. 61.

Mehmed Akšamija, Ciklus „TRAGOVI BOSNE“, *Ornamentalna kompozicija XXVII*, 1996.
 Mehmed Akšamija, Art Set „TRACES OF BOSNIA“, *Ornamental Composition XXVII*, 1996.