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Maktab as an Institution of Elementary Islamic Education in Novi Pazar – A historical aspect

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ABSTRACT

An untruth has been established among a large number of researchers, historians, orientalists, etc., that the causes of illiteracy and ignorance of the members of Islam should be sought in the faith of Islam, that is, in the centuries-old rule of Ottoman Turkey in our region, which, allegedly, did not, adequately, take into account the education of the population. That these claims are not true, we want to show and prove through a brief overview of the historical development and functioning of the institution of maktab, as the primary institution of basic Islamic education in Novi Pazar, a city which was part of the Ottoman Turkey until 1912, when it was attached to the state of Serbia. From its founding in 1461 until today this town was populated by a predominantly Muslim population. In the conclusion of the paper we will present the result of the research. The aim of this research is to confirm the initial hypothesis that is-that during the Turkish rule in this area there was a solid education of the population which, with certain deficiencies, was in accordance with, at that time, level of the state and society development and that the causes of Muslim backwardness in these areas cannot be sought in the guilt of Ottoman Turkey, which left these areas 110 years ago.

Keywords: Maktab, education, mualim, waqif, mosque, Ottoman Turkey, Novi Pazar, Serbia.

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1. Introduction

Historically, maktabas have appeared in the Arab-Islamic society since the very beginning of the functioning of the Islamic state, more precisely in the first half of the 7th century. They are, as an institutional form of primary education, inherited from the pre-Islamic period. The very term "maktab" etymologically originated from the perfect of the Arabic word "kuttab", i.e. "write", from which the participle passive "maktab" is derived, which means "a place where one writes" (maktab, a Muslim primary religious school, which lasts 3 years (Lexicographic Institute, M. K. 2000). In the first decades of the Islamic state, although it did not yet have a classification of sciences into religious and secular (in essence, Islam does not make such a distinction at all), maktabas were primarily profiled as an institution of elementary Islamic and religious education. This was in accordance

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with the principle that a child should first be raised as a spiritually and morally proper being, instilled in the faith in God, pointed out to the difference between good and evil, between beautiful and ugly, taught the basic postulates of the Sharia law, taught to read and write, and after that it is free to tackle various other life challenges. With the geographical expansion of the Islamic society, the Islamic state, i. e. the caliphate, the institution of the maktab expanded and thus reached our region through Ottoman Turkey. Of course, in the Islamic state, the high school type of education was developed at the same time through the form of "madrasah" institutions, as well as various forms of higher education, but we primarily dedicate this paper to the maktab, their origin and development particularly in Novi Pazar. Simultaneously, we note that according to the principle that "there is no coercion in religion", during the Turkish rule in our region, and in the Ottoman state in general, there were special schools for non-Muslim children that respected their religion, culture and civilization. We will not discuss them in detail here. (Redzepagić, J. 1994).

2. Methodology

In this work we primarily use a descriptive method, to describe the subject of research in all its aspects of observation. After the received, both negative and positive results, we subject them to an analytical-synthetic method, emphasizing the arguments and sources that confirm our hypothesis, while stating the opposite claims. Our initial hypothesis is that during the Turkish rule, a solid elementary Islamic education was represented in these areas, through the institution of the maktab, which, in addition to religious elements, had a general educational, secular character. We have also come to the conclusion that the centuries old Turkish rule in these areas, nor the religion of Islam, is not to blame for today's Muslim insufficient economic development and the insufficient education.

3. The operation mode of the maktab

Muslim children received their primary education in the maktab, while non-Muslims were sent to their special religious schools (Čar Drnda, H., 2006). The archives mention primary schools as "Darut-ta'lim," "Muallim-hane," "Maktab" or "Maktab-hane". Maktab classes included all Muslim children regardless of their parents' financial situation. As a free form of education, the maktab were formed in all mahallahs, settlements and villages where there was a sufficient number of students, because if they were not thus distributed, children would have to travel a long distance and hence lose time on travelling, and thus the desire to acquire knowledge. The curriculum was not codified, but depended on the wishes and the material possibilities of the waqif (founder), but it did not deviate from the agreement with the tradition of education. The waqif determined the desired profile of the teacher in his school, while the salary ranged from 1-5 akchas per day and depended on the financial capabilities of the waqif (Čar Drnda, H., 2006).

In this maktab educational system, there were no classes in the modern sense of the word, but there was a so-called "halka system", and it is a manner of learning and teaching in which children sat in a circle (halka) around the teacher and during his presentation. This ring system has been applied in Southeast Europe since the 14th and 15th centuries, and is still used today in Montessori-type schools located in North America, Canada and Western Europe, while the modern pedagogy considers it to be the most suitable method of accessing children and their education. The maktab teach the basics of religion, morals, the Arabic script, in some maktab the Arabic language, grammar and syntax, as well as learning (reading and memorizing) the Qur'an, with the obligation to pass the entire Qur'an during the basic educational program. Children started attending the maktab at the age of 5, and their progress in schooling depended on the individual abilities of the pupils themselves. The pupils who would have mastered the material earlier went to a higher level, they did not have to wait until other students mastered the material (Čar Drnda, H., 2006). "In the maktab, children learned some chapters from the Qur'an; The basic meaning of the Qur'an is "recitation, learning; what needs to be read;... according to Philip Hittie, maktab (kuttap) starting school, it is an elementary school that was attached to the mosque or the classes were organized in the mosque itself" (Redzepagić, J.1994). On the Turkish website: <http://www.egitim.aku.edu.tr/ergun3.htm> the following statement can be read: "The status of primary schools in that period had "Sibijan maktabi" or "Mahalle maktabi". Maktab (Mejtef or Mejtep) is a word of Arabic origin and denotes the

place where primary education (writing) is acquired. The teachers in these schools were called "Muallims" - usually local hodzas, or imams. The maktab started at the age of 7, and at the age of 13-15 a recognition was obtained for acquiring primary education. The greatest attention was paid to learning the Qur'an, followed by writing, literature, history, and later to the foreign languages. Classes were conducted in local languages. Good knowledge of the Turkish language was not implied. Friday was a holiday and a non-working day. A similar system of education existed in Byzantium as well." (Rakić, A. 2014).

The employed teachers, "muallims" were with a completed lower madrasah, then the "hawaja" or mosque officials with the required level of education in the madrasahs called "Darul-kurrallar" (Baltaci, C. 2005). The teachers had their assistants. Their duty was to repeat the past material with the children, but also to keep records of how much the children are able to follow and understand the past material. The assistant teacher received a daily salary of one to two akchas.

Within the waqf institution, in which they were employed, both the teacher and his assistant had additional activities that were paid separately, although even without these additional activities their salaries were at a high level. They enjoyed a reputation in the place where they served. Some of them spent the money, which exceeded their needs, for the common good of the whole community. It is a well-known case that Mujezin-havadže had a masjid built in Novi Pazar, along with which a mahallah was formed (Bašbakanlik, O. A. Istanbul). It is important to note that there was a controller, that is, a certain officer who supervised the work of the teachers, took care of timeliness of the classes, as well as other employees of a certain waqf, about which he informed the waqf manager - muteveli. (Čar Drnda, H., 2006). Muteveli had the right to remove a teacher and appoint another if he did not teach in accordance with the waqf document.

4. Origin and types of maktab

As we have already emphasised, the word maktab in Islamic terminology means: a school where one learns to write (Smailagić, J. N 1990). Maktab or makatib (primary school, maktab, office) is the first type of primary school among the Arabs, also known before Islam as kuttab (pl. ketatib), which means maktab or primary school (Đudić, M. 2007). Sibjan maktab literally means: children's school. This term was common among the Turks and is synonymous with the Arabic word kuttab (primary school). In Turkish sibjan (or sabijja), also means children, and maktab means school.

As Islamic people, the Turks adopted certain cultural heritage of the Arabs and the Persians, especially in the field of organizing life and work, among which are mosques, schools, maktab, and madrasahs. The first maktab built in the Ottoman Empire was built by Sultan Orhan (1326-1362) in Brusa and by his son Sulejman-pasha in Iznik (Nicaea). Maktab, were made in the courtyards of mosques, madrasahs, as independent buildings they had their own waqf document in which the means of subsistence were specified.

We have two types of maktab, maktab with domes (which were rare) and maktab with a hipped roof. Maktab owned summer and winter classrooms. Among the Ottomans, they looked similar to houses (apart from those with a dome). Maktab were built as ground-floor buildings, and not rarely as multi-story buildings. Maktab were built (founded) by sultans, imperial governors, and senior officers, and later merchants and wealthier people in general.

According to their dispositional solution, the maktab can be divided into: One-room – composed only of a classroom,

Two-room – in addition to the classroom, they also have an entrance hall, and

Three-room – in addition to the classroom and hallway, they also have a room for the teacher.

According to the method of establishment, the maktab were:

Waqf – created as an endowment of individuals, with funds left for their work, Popular – construction financed by the people,

Temporary – mostly based in villages, and classes were held there temporarily.

There were a sort of Sibjan maktab that was equated with an elementary school in which secular subjects were later studied as well. Education in the maktab usually lasted until the age of 13-14, when the graduates were issued a certificate of completion of maktab education.

5. Old maktab in Novi Pazar

There have been many educational institutions in Novi Pazar throughout history, and most of them were maktab. Usually maktab are formed within mosques. The first maktab was organized in the mosque of the founder of the city, Isa-bey Ishaković. Apart from this mosque, the space of other mosques was also used for maktab. Thus, the Masjid of Murat Subasha, in certain daily hours within the content of its activities, also had the education of children. The children's teacher was Muezin hawadje. There is no "waqf documentation" for this nor for the other educational institutions that we mention here, so it is not possible to make value judgments about their specifics in their work (Redzepagić, J. 1994).

The Turkish travel writer Evliya Celebi, who passed through this area in the middle of the 17th century, points out that "the city of Novi Pazar then had:

- 23 mosques,
- 2 tekkes,
- 11 masjids,
- 5 madrasahs, two of which are very beautiful,
- 7 Christian places of worship (Orthodox and Catholic)
- 11 primary schools,
- 2 imarets,
- 1 school for the study of sacred tradition (Darul-hadith). (...) Each founder of the mosque built one maktab as well." (Čelebi, E. 1990).

Hence, Novi Pazar had its maktab from the very founding of the city until today. Attendees received certificates of completion of the maktab in which subjects and grades were entered.

The image presents the certificate of Hajji Mustafa Aga Zada Fehim Effendi, a student of the Sibjan-maktab in Novi Pazar. Grades: Qur'an 10, geography 10, history 10, grammar 10, calligraphy 10. Date: August 22, 1887.



Figure 1. Certificate of a completed maktab.

The exact number of maktab in Novi Pazar has not been determined.

However, according to the available sources, we will mention some:

1. Maktab of Gazi Isa-bey - was located along the Gazi Isa-bey mosque, the founder of Novi Pazar. It was built in 1461.
2. Maktab along the Altun-alem mosque - one of the oldest maktab in the area of the Bosnian eyalet.
3. Maktab near the Hadji Hurem (Bor) mosque - dates from the 19th century.
4. Maktab in the Menteshel Alija mahallah- built next to the mosque or in the mosque in 1489.
5. Maktab in the Murat Subasha masjid - mentioned in 1489.
6. Maktab near the Melajska mosque - it was built before 1540.
7. Maktab of Sinan-bey - built in the period between 1528-1540,
8. Maktab of Sinan, son of Abdullah the Miner - was built in the 16th century next to the Madeni Sinan Mosque.
9. Maktab of Ishaq, son of Abdullah - mentioned in 1540
10. Maktab of Hajruddin, son of Ilyas - built before 1540.

11. Maktab in the mahallah near the Old Tekija market - built in 1900
12. Maktab in Sofi Memi's mahallah - 1900
13. Maktab in Kapuji-basha mahallah - 1900
14. Maktab near Lejlek mosque - according to the inscription from 1891, a maktab was built in the courtyard of the mosque.
15. Maktab near Palanka mosque - 1900.
16. Maktab near Dibak-Ishak mosque - 1900
17. Dervish-bey maktab - built in the 16th century, mentioned in the 1604 census.
18. Maktab of Iskender subasha - built before 1540.
19. Maktab of Iskender - Celebi, son of Jakub - was located in the Iskender Celebi mahallah, next to the eponymous masjid.
20. Maktab of Kurd Celebi - functioned as part of the Kurd Celebi mosque.
21. Maktab of Hussein, son of Hasan - was built during the 16th century.

6. The oldest Novi Pazar maktab

The maktab along the Altun-alem mosque is one of the oldest maktab of the former Bosnian eyalet, which has been preserved to this day. At the same time, it is the most important maktab in the architecturally shaped perspective, in which the elements of monumental architecture were merged with the residential ones in a very harmonious manner. Since the waqf document of the waqif of the Altun-alem mosque has been preserved we know his name, Muslihudin Abdul Gani, known as Muezin-hodja el Medini, a man who built a large number of other buildings in Novi Pazar, Skopje and Stari Trg. He built a mosque, a maktab and a house for the imam, and thus formed a center around which the mahallah was created. This mahallah is mentioned in the cadastral censuses from the 16th and 17th centuries. From 1528-1530, a mahala under the name of Masjid Muezin Hodja is mentioned; this mahallah accounted for 35 households and one bachelor (Vujović, S. 1990). This maktab, along the Altun-alem mosque, gathered children from the mahallah in which it was located. The maktab was of an educational and upbringing character. The waqif set the following conditions in the waqf document: "And he appointed four dirhams a day for the mualim, and one dirham for the deputy, and set the condition for the mualim to be reliable and the best of the good, steadfast, capable of lecturing and teaching (Andrejević, A.1984).

The maktab is located in the courtyard of the Altun-alem mosque and according to the analysis of prof. M. Bećirbegović, belongs to the developed types of maktab, which in addition to the classroom also has a premise for the teacher. "The dimensions of the building are 12.3 x 8.25 meters, on the south side it has been extended by the width of the stairs. The two premises on the ground floor have been converted into: the larger one in the ghusl room, which has one window, and the smaller one in the wudu room, which receives light from three windows. The staircase leading to the second floor in the veranda is made of wood. Except on the wall towards the veranda, where one window is open, the other three walls have two windows each. On the ground floor, a brick was used as a filling, and on the first floor are used bricks of the old format. The mezzanine ceiling is made of wood. The most representative is the main facade facing the mosque. In terms of architecture and design, the elements of residential architecture were united with the elements of the monumental architecture of the Altun-alem mosque. On the ground floor there are two arched ends that are functionally and aesthetically connected to the rectangular windows of the mosque in the lower level. Above these openings are two arched windows, analogous to the second-level windows on the facades of the mosque. The façade canvas is very picturesquely done, created under the influence of the Byzantine style, with rows of horizontal masonry bricks, parts plastered over the crushed stone imitating hewn stone and vertical masonry bricks between them. On the first floor, the layer is difficult to distinguish, because the facade is replastered and the Byzantine layer is imitated with paint in plaster. At the end of the facade and around the floor windows, there are too rustically painted surfaces. The western, side-facing façade is simpler, and with its folklore treatment, the maktab has partly taken on the character of residential architecture. The facade is also characterized by various windows in pairs, on the ground floor and on the first floor. The wall surfaces are plastered and painted.

The north façade has openings only on the floor - two with arched ends in the classroom, and one square in the teacher's room. The lower wall of the facade is built of crushed stone with irregular rows of bricks. Above this surface, the wall has a Byzantine layer, and in a part of the teacher's room, the wall is plastered with a layer that is imitated with paint in plaster. The eastway side has a side facade treatment. The roof is covered with shingles and has a wide eaves of about 90 cm, except over the part where the staircase is located and where the outlet due to the large width of 2.30 meters, is supported by a hive. The heads of the horns are decorated.

In the interior, all the walls are plastered and painted white. The floors on the first floor are made of planks, while the ground floor is made of concrete. The windows on the part of the building with a bondruk construction differ from each other. All three windows on the ground floor, as well as the windows on the first floor, towards the veranda, have wooden bars with tolpas and frames made of profiled moldings. The upstairs windows close on the "surna," except for the double-sided window on the north façade. Two street-oriented windows are designed as a single opening, and between them is a very beautiful shallow-cut representation of a vase of flowers, on a wider board. In the interior of the teacher's room, modeled on residential architecture, horizontal wooden moldings were made along the edges of the windows, while a shelf was formed on the upper side, and a bookcase in the corner. The doors, with the exception of the new ones, double-sided for ghusl room, have a similar finishing, with nailed, simply profiled boards, over a solid wooden base." (Vujović, S.1990).

7. Educational reform

What we want to emphasize here is that in the 19th century there were radical changes in the Turkish state which affected education in certain places, and especially in Novi Pazar. During that century, Muslim state schools (predominantly secular), began to evolve, resulting in the neglect of maktabs as religious schools. These public schools have evolved under the influence of the school systems of Western European countries, primarily in the reputation of French lay schools. This period of reform of the entire socio-economic system, and the education itself in the Turkish state, is known as Tanzimat (Aličić, S. A. 1983). I. e. a period of reform that lasted from 1839 to 1876, in science is also known as Hatti-sheriff of Gulhana. In this decree, which reminds of the French Declaration on the Rights of Man and Citizen (1789), the sultan promised his subjects the religious and political equality and the security of life, honor and property (Hadzibegić, H.1966).

By the end of the 19th century, secondary schools-madrasas and ruzdija, as well as primary schools, iptidaije (but to a lesser extent) also sibijan maktabs, were developing in Novi Pazar.

There were 14 Sibijan maktabs, with a total of 380 children in them, which was a decrease compared to the previous period. According to Turkish documents, in the period from 1877 to 1902, in addition to Muslim schools, there was also a Jewish school in the city (Redzepagić, J. 1994).

8. Instead of a conclusion

In almost all Muslim countries, maktabs still exist even today. Of course, as an optional sort of education, because there is a mandatory sort of primary education organized in accordance with modern methods of education and upbringing. In many states where Muslims live as minorities, they can also religiously educate their children in maktabs organized within mosques and other religious facilities. In addition to religious education, which they receive in traditional maktabs, secular schools in Serbia also provide Muslim children with the opportunity to organize and attend religious classes.

The focus of our research was on the review and analyses of the institutions that provided basic Islamic education, these are primarily the maktabs. Our goal was to know the possible causes of the lag and stagnation of education in the city, but also to show the real state of functioning of primary education and literacy, primarily of the Muslim population during the Turkish rule from the 25th to the end of the 19th century, in Novi Pazar, Sandzak, and Serbia.

It should be emphasized that in the maktab the children are taught good behavior, service to the community, tolerance and respect for the customs and traditions of members of other religious communities. This "Ottoman legacy" has been a tradition of Bosniak Muslims for more than five centuries. Maktabs are said to be the first type of primary school created by the Arabs, known

before Islam as "kuttab," and with the advent of Islam it often appears adjoined with the mosque itself. So, in Ottoman times, maktabas were primary schools directly connected to mosques. With the departure of the Turks from this area in 1912, along with the abolition of the Arabic alphabet and the introduction of a new system of education, all members of Islam who could read and write at that time suddenly became illiterate. Thus Muslims are stigmatized to be uneducated and backward. This false label - that Muslims do not even want to be educated, especially the female children, accompanies the Muslims of this area to this day - that they are illiterate and uneducated because, allegedly their religion does not allow them to be educated. This statement is contrary to the first verse of the Qur'an which says "learn, read, study, in the name of God who creates everything..." Of course, Muslims-Bosniaks in this area are educated like other citizens and there are no illiterates among them today. However, although there are modern ways of education and upbringing that Muslims receive, in addition, even today in all major mosques in Novi Pazar there are maktabas, in line with regulations on freedom of religion and respect of human rights. Writing on this topic, the academician Jašar Redžepagić often said, "It has long been established that without knowledge of the development of education in the past, it is not possible to understand school life today, or even predict educational activities in the future. In particular, the education under the Ottoman rule was neglected and often any merit of Islamic schools and education was rejected. In this regard, Safvet-beg Bašagić, PhD, in his dissertation 'Bosniaks and Herzegovinians in Islamic Literature' literally points out: 'a hasty phrase that is often heard from invited and uninvited factors, namely: That our homeland under the Turkish governance languished in darkness and slavery: In the twentieth century, faith should not make a difference; enlightenment is enlightenment, no matter whether it came from the east or from the west'" (Redžepagić, J. 1994).

During this research, we came to the conclusion that the main disadvantage of education in the studied period was that maktabas, as the only form of education for a long period of time, did not include children from rural areas, especially female children, but were mostly available to urban children.

The neglect of female children is contrary to the Qur'an imperatives which speak of the obligatory acquisition of knowledge equally for both male and female gender. Cultural perceptions have contributed to the fact that female children, in the time of the Ottoman state, as well as in some countries today, were tied exclusively to household chores.

The lack of previous research and critical reviews of the maktab educational system is that it is mistakenly believed that the maktabas were exclusively providing religious education. Namely, that is not true because solid knowledge from secular sciences was acquired through the maktabas. Thus, our hypothesis has been confirmed-in their time, the maktabas passed the exam, and for today's backwardness in education and science among some Muslim nations, the Turkish rule in this area cannot be blamed. The Turks left this area 110 years ago, so the causes and weaknesses in education and schooling should be sought in new socio-economic regimes, discrimination against members of Islam in relation to other citizens, violations of human and minority rights, and other problems of the modern world.

Today, for the children younger than the maktab age, there are kindergartens where Muslim children are brought up in accordance with the faith and tradition of their parents. In Novi Pazar, as well as in other places in Sandzak, there are Schools of the Holy Qur'an in which the memorization of this holy book is taught by heart.

We must mention that in Novi Pazar, which has about 130 thousand inhabitants, there are now several state primary and secondary schools, and there are two universities – one private and one state university with several thousand students of various educational profiles.

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