

A Unique and Great Period of History of Islam in Hungary: The Community of Bosnian Veterans (1931-1947)¹

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Introduction

Islam in Hungary has a long history that dates back to at least the 10th century. The influence of Sunni Islam was especially pronounced in the 16th century during the Ottoman period in Hungary.

Prior to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy's occupancy of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1878, Professor Ármin Vámbéry's (1832-1913) name must be mentioned, whose Islamic name was Rashid Efendi. His Tartar servant, Ishak was a representative of Islam in contemporary Hungary. Vámbéry, the "lame dervish", was a member of the Academy of Science of Hungary and the Professor of Turkology in University of Budapest. He received help thanks to his Ottoman-Turkish relationships to travel around Central-Asia as a dervish.² His later student, Gyula Germanus, Arabist, Writer, Traveller and also a

Professor, who became also a Muslim (Hajji Abdul-Karim Julius Germanus), writes on this as follows: *"his thirst of knowledge took him to Timurlenk's grave, to the wild and uneducated Nomads of the Central-Asian deserts and worn under his dervish cloth the heart of a Hungarian hero."*³ Vámbéry joined the Hajj caravan of Bokhara as Rashid Effendi in 1861. He travelled to Khiva and, then, to Bokhara through Erzurum, Tabriz and the Caspian-Sea. He arrived back to Hungary through Samarkand, Meshed and Tehran in 1864. He had very significant, pioneering results related to geography, ethnography of Central-Asia and Turkish philology. Several European scientific societies chose him as their member of honour.

Pasha Miksa Herz of Hungarian origins embraced Islam at the end of the 19th century and founded the Arabic Museum of Cairo, today's Museum of Islamic Arts, and later he became the Minister of Religious Affairs.

1. The Islamization of the Immigrants of the Revolution and War of Independence of 1848-1849⁴

The aftermaths of the Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence of 1848-1849 should also be noted because many Hungarian and Polish soldiers, who tried to escape from the gallows, prison or forced recruitment, embraced Islam. The first days 238 persons, divided by nationality, 216 Hungarians including 8 women, 7 Polish, 15

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(1) See more for this study: Zoltán Bolek: The History of Islam in Hungary in: <http://magyariszlam.hu/angol/kep2.html> Accessed on 11 July 2017.

(2) On Vámbéry's life and work see: <http://vambergy.mtak.hu/index-en.html> Accessed on 3 August 2017.

(3) Germanus Gyula: Kelet varázsa. Budapest, Magvető, 1975. p. 23.

(4) See more for this chapter:
Szöllősy Ferencz: Kossuth és a magyar emigráció török földön. Lipcse, 1870.
Veress Sándor: A magyar emigráció a Keleten. Budapest, Athenaeum, 1879.

Italians, 3 generals, 3 colonels and sub-colonels, 60 other chief officers, 172 warrant officers and common soldiers, and a delegate, János Balogh, embraced Islam. Later on, several people chose the Islamic faith along with the Turkish nationality. It's sufficient to mention the names of the following Generals: Joseph Bem, Richard Guyon, George Kmetty. The Hungarian and Polish revolutionists proved their bravery and perseverance. Both the Austrian and the Russian governments strongly claimed the extradition of the immigrants and this claim was also accompanied by threats. Abdülmecid I., the Sultan on power, directly denied it and he declared in the Divan, the Council of the Sultan.

General Bem was given the name of Murad and the rank of pasha. Bem led the reorganization of the Ottoman Army for a while and, then, he was sent to Aleppo. In 1850 he fought for the Syrian Christians against the Druze. He left this word with these words on 10th of December, 1850: *"Poland, I will never free you again..."* Bem's ashes were transported from the Syrian city of Aleppo to his birthplace, Tarnow, in Poland. The train getting to the Railway Station of Kelebia marched through Hungary in triumph. His coffin was laid out on the stairs of the National Museum. The decision of commemorating him with a statue was made at this time. The arrival of Bem's ashes was awaited enthusiastically. However, he was denied to rest in "Christian Polish land". Six huge pillars raise the stone sarcophagus containing the rests of Józef Bem, Murad pasha. Three generations are proud of him.

Count Maximilian Stein was given the name of Ferhad along with the rank of pasha. General George Kmetty became Ismail pasha. One can also mention Louis Tüköry, respected as a revolutionary hero in Italy. He participated with the name of Selim effendi as first horse-lieutenant and participated in the Crimean War as the military assistant of Guyon and Kmetty. He was given the rank

of Lieutenant Commander and left the Army in 1858 and joined the Hungarian legion in Italy.

The life of John Pap, later retired court office director, was typical among Hungarian Muslims. After the defeat of the revolution, he embraced Islam with the name of Suleiman bey in Turkey, served with Guyon pasha as Captain and participated in the Crimean War as well. He also left the Turkish Army to join Garibaldi and finally got back to Hungary after the Reconciliation in 1867. Richard Guyon, Hursid pasha rests in the cemetery Haydarpasa of Istanbul, Turkey. His grave is indicated with a board of Hungarian inscription that says: *"This grave gives place to the ashes to Richard Guyon, son of France, student of England, soldier of Hungary and Commander-in-Chief of Turkey."*

The Hungarian nation later gave obvious support to the Turks in the Turkish-Russian War and the relations improved between the two countries. The Hungarian University students paid a visit of honour to Constantinople in January of 1877 where a sword of honour was handed over to pasha Abdul-Karim, hero of Plevna. The Sultan gifted them 35 Corvinas and the softas, Turkish students, paid a visit to Hungary in April 1877. The knowledge of having common origins also played an important role, as Ármin Vámbéry sought for the cradle of the Hungarians in Central-Asia in the area of Turkish-speaking peoples.

2. After the Occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (1878)⁵

In the 19th century 39 percent of Bosnia-Herzegovina's population was of Muslim region and followed the Hanafi religious school. The Monarchy had half million Muslim citizens after the occupation of Bos-

(5) See more: Lederer György: A magyarországi iszlám újabb kori történetéhez I-II. In: Keletkutatás. 1988. ősz. 29-49. old. -1989. tavasz. 53-72. old. Bolek: Ibid.

nia-Herzegovina and this period coincided with the start of Muslim immigration towards Hungary. Along with the Bosnians, Albanian and other Balkan Muslim people, Turkish emigrants also came to Hungary.

The major change to the life of Bosnia-Herzegovina came along from 1882 that accelerated the integration process of Muslims in the Monarchy and helped their settlement and emancipation in Hungary. A Hungarian diplomat-historian, Béni Kállay, Minister of Finance, was nominated as head of the military occupied region and he favoured Muslims against the Greek-Catholic. The majority of the believers pertinent to the Greek-Roman Church were of Serbian origins and the Serbian intention to take hold of Bosnia was obvious by then. The operation of the vakifs (merciful Islamic foundations), medreses (Islamic schools) and the Sharia courts (courts of Islamic jurisprudence also called as "nizamiye" in Bosnia) that tried to make investigation on Muslims' matters was supported by the Authorities. Kállay regarded it important on tactical, strategic and ideological grounds, that the Bosnian occupation should not be a burden on the Monarchy with ethnic groups of little loyalty. Béni Kállay tried to rely on the aristocracy of Islamic religion. This social class would have collapsed after the elimination of the feudalistic property relations. Thus, Kállay worked out a concept based on a slow transitional process. It was Béni Kállay who started the modernization of Bosnia-Herzegovina on Western basis.

In 1908, Bosnia-Herzegovina was definitely annexed to the Monarchy. The Hungarian-Bosnian-Herzegovina Economic Centre was set up with Leó Lánczy as chairman. The several publications of the centre provided data to the Hungarian businessmen who owned companies there. The 6th edition of the leaflet included an article of Géza Magyary on "Regulation of the legal situation of Islam in Hungary".⁶ The Austrian law had been effective since July 1912,

that admitted the Hanafi school in Hungary, the Hungarian legislation, however, was not so modern to approve of it. Based on the population counting of 1910, there were 553 Muslims, 179 Turks and 319 Bosnians, the majority of these was soldier, living in Hungary without Croatia and Slavonia and the number of Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina was 612.137 persons. The major part of Turks settled down in Hungary at the end of the first decade of the century.

They were mainly craftsmen, pastry cooks, and students whose first group arrived here in 1909 along with Sheikh Abdul-Latif. The sympathy for the Turks increased in Hungary when the ashes of Prince Ferenc Rákóczi, Countess Ilona Zrínyi and Prince Imre Thököly were transported back to Hungary. In 1914 the Monarchy proclaimed war against Serbia and local fights soon lead to the breakout of World War I. The Ottoman Empire officially entered the war on 29 October 1914 on the German Empire's and Austro-Hungarian Monarchy's side. The Turkish units fought not just on the borders of our country but Turkish troops were sent to Galicia and Romania where they were fighting along with the Hungarian troops. The Turkish military cemetery of Kozma street, Budapest gives place to the ashes of Turkish soldiers who died in World War I.

In December 1914, Rezső Havass claimed the construction of a mosque at Budapest City Hall General Assembly: "*Let's build a mosque in Budapest!*"⁷ The suggestion was approved by the General Assembly of the capital as a resolution on 4 April 1916 and a Commission controlling the construction of a mosque was set up. The Turkish-Hungarian military alliance was so strong that the name of Múzeum Avenue was changed to Mehmed Avenue.

(6) A Magyar-Bosnyák-Hercegovinai Gazdasági Központ kiadványai. 6. füzet. Budapest, 1913.

(7) Lederer: Ibid. p. 38.

The Hungarian nationalist and, mainly, war-supporting public had such strong influence on the Parliament that the approval of Islam as an official religion was also on agenda. The proposal was made by Béla Jankovich, Minister of Religion and Public Education, and Gyula Pekár, MP: *"Ladies and Gentlemen of the Parliament! This bill whose five paragraphs relates the five long and troublesome centuries of the Eastern history of Hungary in a fraternal and peaceful manner and intends to make peace between the religious ideology of the East and the West, it can only give us satisfaction regardless of its significance. (Applause) It is about the acceptance of the religion of 220 million Muslims. When adopting this bill, however, the Hungarian legislation also focuses on the noble and heroic Turkish nation to which we are united by the strong bonds of Turanic fraternity besides the military alliance! (Approval and cheering)"*⁸ Pekár went on talking about Gül-Baba's grave, Bosnia-Herzegovina and the dominance of Islam there as main religion and the Austrian Act of 1912 aforesaid and the possibilities that the Hungarian legislation can give to Muslims resident here. Béla Barabás, MP, one of the members of the former student delegation in Constantinople in 1877, was the spokesman of the opposition. He delivered the same message with more enthusiasm, major passion and details. History came alive in the Hall of Parliament. The "kuruc" in exile, the immigrant soldiers and politicians of 1848-1849, Murad pasha of Aleppo i.e. József Bem, the handover of the confiscated Corvines (books of King Matthias), the memory of Sultan Suleiman and some jokes about the Muslim marriage, divorce and inheritance regulations, the Buda Gül Baba shrine (türbe), the heritage of Dániel Irányi and Kálmán Thaly along within the words of Kossuth ("To the East, Hungarians!") were also narrated. Béla Barabás added: *"With growing age but much enthusiasm, with the memories and mentality of old times all I can do is to suggest that we, Hungarians, bow to the Turkish half moon. I ap-*

*prove of this proposal delighted."*⁹ The Act was also approved by the opposition (Néppárt) with the exception of one MP.

3. Act No. 17. of 1916 on the Admission of the Islamic Religion:¹⁰

Paragraph 1: The Islamic faith is proclaimed to be an officially admitted religion.

Paragraph 2: It is not required to present the regulations on religious and moral teachings and other religious rituals for Muslims to create a religious association, nor it is needed to present the organizational regulation that includes further dispositions on religious life and they will not be examined at the approval of the organizational regulation.

Paragraph 3: The Hungarian organization of the Muslim religious denomination can be connected to the legal organization of Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina with the approval of the Minister of Religion and Education. The role of Sheikh, religious magistrate or member of the upper ecclesiastic organizational delegation can be played by a member of the congregation whose qualification meets the expectations of the qualification to this position in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Likewise, Sheikhs can be employed even prior to the setup of the first religious congregation, if their costs of living are provided.

Paragraph 4: The practice of the Islamic religion and its religious principles, teachings and other institutions are under the same legal protection as the other legally admitted religions. The same legal regulations shall be binding to the Muslim religious community as the other legally admitted religions. Any further, necessary differences shall be specified by a Ministry Order.

(8) Képviselőházi Napló XXVIII. 1916. I. 12. p. 173.

(9) Képviselőházi Napló XXVIII. 1916. I. 13. pp. 205-211.

(10) Országos Törvénytár, 1916. március 30. See: <https://1000ev.hu/index.php?a=3¶m=7348> Accessed on 3 August 2017.

Paragraph 5: This Act becomes effective on the day of its proclamation and it shall be completed by the Minister of Religion and Education, the Minister of Home Office and the Minister of Justice.

The Act was proclaimed on 30th of March, 1916 in the National Legal Code No. 9. of 1916. This Act is effective up to now as it has never been withdrawn. The approved law, Act No. 17 on the Admission of the Islamic Religion differed from the Act No. 43 of 1895 on the Free Practise of Religion. Regardless of that, in accordance with the Act No. 43 of 1895 all the organizational regulations comprising the provisions on the existence of the Muslim religious congregation shall be issued to the Minister of Religion and Public Education for approval, while the previous law partially disregarded it. The previous act prohibited that the future Islamic religious congregation cannot be headed or protected by a foreign authority or individual, i.e. sultan or caliph, while the latter absolved this prohibition. In addition, Act no.17. also disregarded the passage of Act No. 43. of 1895 which says that only a Sheikh or ecclesiastic person can be a member of the community who has graduated from a University of Hungary. However, the Hungarian citizenship still stayed as a condition. The Act of 1916 excluded the application of the Islamic punitive, inheritance and family law in Hungary. The future community is entitled to set up a foundation, collect ecclesiastic tax, start disciplinary procedure and establish school or kindergarten. The acknowledged communities could have larger rights as the only "approved" Baptists or the future Islamic community. The Act of 1916 admits the whole of Islam, while the Austrian Act of 1912 only speaks about the Hanafi School present in Bosnia. The law was adapted owing to the concept of Turkish-Hungarian military alliance and Budapest only had 2000 Muslims, comprised of Bosnian soldiers, Albanian- and Balkan craftsmen, students,

Turkish soldiers and craftsmen, in 1916, the Members of Parliament voted on the Islamic faith with future projects on the complete integration of Bosnia. It evokes Kállay Béni's dream on the Bosnian Muslim ruling class as we were in war against Serbia, so, the Serbs were regarded unreliable.¹¹

The illustrated great calendar of Bosnian Hungarians, dated in 1916, demonstrates the Bosnian-Turkish-Hungarian military alliance. The colonels who make part of the K. und K. Army believe in the victory of the Monarchy and they are fully committed to the Emperor-King. In addition, Several Albanian and Macedonian Muslims fought in the K. und K. against the Western alliance. When the collapse came over, they had to realize that only death sentence awaits them in the Serbian Bosnia.

Many Bosnian or Albanian Muslim colonels followed the Hungarian troops withdrawn from Bosnia and settled down in Budapest or Vienna. It is interesting though that many general chief officers stayed in Hungary on a permanent basis and they could return home or chose Hungary as their homeland upon the collapse of the Hungarian Commune led by the Communist.¹²

The Muslim presence in South-Hungary is related to the presence of French troops, so, they were here as invaders, thus, these Muslims did not want to settle down here and they were not driven by good intentions. They were Northern-Africans and the supporters of the counter-revolution had intense contacts with them. There are reports on their close friendship and on the dance of the Arab soldiers with guns which was admired by the Hungarians. Another famous Hungarian Muslim should be mentioned who participated in the Anti-British fights after the Mahdi-revolt in Sudan. He embraced Islam and was known as Ignac Soliman.

(11) Lederer: *Ibid.* p. 39.

(12) See more: Bolek: *Ibid.*

When the British finally occupied Sudan, he was prohibited to enter the country again, he returned to Hungary and bought a land in Transylvania. He also had the chance to meet governor, Miklós Horthy, and this meeting is recorded. His name appeared in the columns of the newspapers of 1880ies.¹³

4. Durics Hilmi Hussein (1887-1940), Imam and the Muslims of Hungary (Interwar Period)

After the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, several Bosnian soldiers and civilians stayed in the territory of present Hungary i.e. Hungary after the Treaty of Trianon. Durics Hilmi Hussein was one of them who finally moved to our country from Vienna. According to his biography, he was born on 11 November 1887 in the city of Bosna Krupa, Durics Mahmud Aga, his father, was the Mayor of the city and a rich land owner, too.

He finished his high school studies at Darul Muallimin with excellent results and he took his degree of Islam Theology from the University of Cairo and Constantinople. Sources say that he had an excellent command of German and Turkish besides Hungarian, Bosnian and he spoke fluent Arabic and Persian. From 1910 he worked as the Director of the record office of Bosnia's National Museum. In 1914 he was called in to military service after the breakout of World War I. and he was in attendance of the mixed, but mostly Muslim, Bosnian regiment as their Field Imam. His autobiography¹⁴ relates that he was present at all the seat of war where the troops of the Monarchy fought. In 1915 his lungs were seriously injured by a shot and his left knee was also wounded at the Southern seat of war in Sabác. After getting recovered from his injury, he was called in to service again as a substitute field imam and he was given the position of "Muslim Field Chief Imam" by the Ministry of war and this job

was confirmed by Emperor Francis Joseph. This position was also followed by the title of Captain. He was designated as brevet by the end of the War. He also gave lessons on Islamic religion to the students of Vienna's Cadet School. When the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy collapsed, his father was shot to death and the family lands equivalent to 1040 acres were confiscated along with the house. In 1919 he got married to the daughter of Elek Hindy-Szabó, Colonel Guard called Ida who was older than him. They moved to Budapest in October 1920 accepting with resignation the Bosnian situation. This is the time that Durics and his 85 fellows joined Pál Prónay's military group. They took part in the revolt of Western Hungary and it is also the merit of the Bosnian-Albanian rebels that Sopron had preserved its Hungarian status quo. The anniversary of the Sopron referendum that took place in 1921 is celebrated every year in Sopron. However, only few people remember that the organization of referendum was not achieved by politicians from the Entente countries but by some hundred voluntary warriors whose significant part was comprised of Bosnian-Albanian volunteers. These soldiers were also much affected by the new map of Europe, redesigned by force, and many of them became homeless and they found the ideology for which they were ready to sacrifice their lives in the so-called "Ragged Guard" (Rongyos Gárda). Many of them fled the Serb Army by two, three and once even a division fled with complete armature regardless that the land was not their own. They sacrificed their own life to get the right to live here.¹⁵

These soldiers prevented the Austrian organized Army and Police from taking hold of the areas gained owing to the Peace Treaty of Trianon. They occupied whole Burgenland and proclaimed the state of "Lajtabánság".

(13) Bolek: Ibid.

(14) A Medriczky-hagyaték (dosszié). In: Budapest Főváros Levéltára. XIV. 24.

(15) See more: Bolek: Ibid.

Just few words could be mentioned about these great deeds and only some people know who these heroic rebellious soldiers were. The fact that Sopron, a historical town in Western Hungary preserved her Hungarian status owing to the battle of Ágfalva as this lead to the negotiations of Venice. The only soldier who died on the battlefield on 5 September in defence of the Hungarian lands was a Bosnian Muslim called Ahmed. The Albanian Muslim group was lead by Hassan beg, a deserted hodja. His courage and audacity were legendary. The Muslim soldiers were also given one of the 3000 bronze medallions, coined by the order of Pál Prónay, along with other soldiers. The medallions were also accompanied by a "Medallion Certificate of Lajtabánság" that entitled them to wear the medallion. Durics later became the prominent figure of the Hungarian Muslim life. He was also decorated with bronze medallion of the revolt of Western-Hungary, coined by the order of Prónay in 3000 pieces in the short lived "Lajtabánság", along with the other medallions of World War I.

Durics attained the Hungarian citizenship in Kecskemét in February 1927. It might seem strange, as he lived in Molnár street, Budapest. However, he could not pay the much higher fee charged in Budapest, so, he decided by Kecskemét where he also had many friends, mostly agriculturors, in the Ragged Guard lead by Pál Prónay and Iván Héjjas.

Durics Hilmi Hussein also annexed a CV to his request. This CV and the interview given to Pál Móricz, journalist of the "Buda Diary" weekly paper, in 1932 were our information sources. Durics Hilmi Hussein, the founder and leader of the modern history of Islam in Hungary, transformed from an "Efendi", virtually an impoverished military officer, into "a Great Mufti of Buda" who travelled all around the world and whose figure appeared on the first pages of journals. His destiny also defined the fate of the Hungar-

ian Muslim community. He had the dream of setting up an Islamic centre, close to Gül Baba's shrine, under his own leadership. Today's Muslims of Hungary are still lack of this centre regardless that 85 years have passed by.

The estimated number of Muslims of the era was around 4000 in Hungary and 300 of them belonged to the Turkish colony that stayed here after World War I, under the religious guidance of the Turkish Imam, Abdul Latif. Professor Gyula Germanus speaks about 30,000 Muslims. The others were Bosnians, Albanians and Macedonians. They are mainly blue-collar workers, craftsmen, gardeners and junior officers and some fence trainers. It was hard for them to get adapted and identified to the Hungarian background as many of them struggled for long with linguistic problems as well. Their culture, mind set and religion also impeded their fast assimilation. How did they become the enthusiastic supporters of the Hungarian conservative government and far-right parties? One one hand, they were also the victims of Trianon, on the other hand their patriotic feelings also granted them political equality in Hungarian society. The Buda Diary published an article of one page on the Foundation of the autonomous community of Islamic religion on 3 August 1931.

The notaries and authenticators were also elected. In addition, the Mejlis i.e. the Council of the elderly which was also referred to as a kind of presbytery by the press, was also elected. Ismail Mehmedagics, Imam of Buda and vice-mufti was elected as Mu-ezzin, Mehmed Reszulovics was conceded the title of notary and secretary, while Abdul Latif was given the role of judge of the Buda Sharía Court. Durics Hilmi Hussein was designated to the position of religious leader and Mufti. Several Christians, like Tivadar Galánthay-Glock, retired General, who had sympathy for Islam were also members of the Mejlis. The legal counsel of the community

was Lidértejedi dr Kiss Árpád. Dániel Gegus, retired Vice-Chief Captain, and Dr. Siegfried Umlauff, late Bosnian regional leader, were charged with the role of substitution. The Independent Hungarian Islamic Religious Community of Buda also compiled a regulation of 12 pages that was prepared along with Christian supporters of the community. We have knowledge about two Members of Parliament, Dr. István Bárczy and dr. Jenő Kozma, were patrons along with 3 other Hungarians, namely Dr Vilmos Henyey, late State Secretary and President of Hollos Mátyás Society, Editor and local patriot Béla Viraág, the Vice-President and butler of the same society and György Petricevich retired General, Chief-Secretary of the military Maria-Teresia Order and Vice-President of the Gül-Baba Cultural Committee. Gyula Germanus, Arabist, Writer, Traveller and the most famous Hungarian Muslim, had the responsibility of Chief-Secretary of the Culture Committee which was an exclusively Christian organization that backed Durics and his companion and lead the work related to the community. These personalities were so prestigious and influential that the Vice-Mayor of Budapest, Endre Liber, gave them an appointment when their Bosnian-Hungarian protégés asked for admission in August of 1931.¹⁶

Abdul-Latif did not accept the title offered to him and he also questioned Durics's title as "religious leader". Durics Hilmi and Abdul-Latif, who was not a Hungarian citizen just a Turkish Imam left here by the Ottoman Era, had debates on the columns of the local press for years mutually accusing each other. As it is well-known, the great Islam researcher who also became a Muslim, Gyula Germanus, got in touch with the Hungarian-Bosnian Muslims and, as he suggested them regarding Durics Hilmi as their leader, he attained an enemy in Abdul-Latif's person.

He describes this period in his book, Allahu Akbar, as follows: "...A Hungarian Muslim religious community was founded during my stay in India. Its members were mainly Bosnians who gained Hungarian citizenship. After the foundation of the community, one of them made the call for prayer i.e. the edhan and the news was published in the press of the Muslim world and it filled the Muslim hearts of love. I witnessed how the eyes of the old Muslims looked up in the sky with tears in their eyes when their companions read them the news from the journals. (...) These Bosnian-Hungarian Muslims, all poor and hard-working blue-collar workers, came to my place and expressed their hope for my help. Upon my advice, the Hungarian Muslim Council intended to make a peaceful agreement and cooperation between Abdul-Latif and the Bosnian-Hungarian imam but this intent failed due to the Turkish imam's stubborn nature. He feared to lose his privileged position owing to the autonomic works of the Hungarian Muslim community and he wished to cross it over by all means."¹⁷

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The Hungarian Muslims also celebrated the feast of St. Stephen held in the capital on 20 August 1931 at the address of 19 Hold street. Durics Hilmi Hussein held his first official religious speech of the newly founded Muslim community: "(...) One should not be worried about this country, which we, Hungarian Muslims, also make part of, until Hungary follows her first wise king's traditions. We will also get rid of the chains of Trianon Treaty created by human short-sightedness and wickedness, insAllah. Allah ordered freedom and not prison to the Hungarian nation. We, Hungarian Muslim of Slave mother tongue but of Hungarian attachment, are also part of the ancient Turanian-Iranian family; our ancient land was an ornament of St. Stephen's crown, so, we love our Hungarian country and, if required, we will defend it by sacrificing our lives and blood for it. The Quran orders us to love God and our Coun-

(16) See more: Lederer: Ibid.

(17) Germanus Gyula: Allah Akbar I-II. Budapest, Szépirodalmi, 1984. pp. 73-75.

try and we follow Allah's commandments. The faith of the living, Almighty, Merciful and True God is threatened by Satan's hordes and they want to render people anti-religious, atheist, immoral and orphan. They prefer machines to God, immorality to morality, inequality to love for your fellow brother and special estimation. They confront rough financial interests with honesty, they split up the traditions of family life, they incite children to revolt against their parents, split up the respect of authority and want to set up the country of the Dajjal (Anti-Messiah) of Moscow. They demolish mosques, churches, houses of worship, schools and they build altars to immorality and atheism. Should this Satanic attack come from either the West or the East, Islam proclaims veto on it! We must gather around God to bring down the power of Satan and his auxiliary troops and lead people back to the way of the fear of God, respect of authority, honesty, patriotism and mercy. There is no life, no advance and no prosperity without and against God! It's essential for Hungary to accept Islam in the future great war because, if all the believers come together, then, the St. Stephen's Kingdom will not be only a passing phenomenon of history but it will extend again from the Carpathians to the Adriatic-Sea. We, Hungarian Muslims, bow our heads with respect to Saint Stephan, the prophet of this country, and we sing together with our Hungarian Christian brother: Where are you, St. Stephen, we, Hungarians, need you and wait for you in draped in black and crying in front of you. Ameen."¹⁸

These speeches and the leaders of the Muslim movement of the period were characterized by the will of taking the lost areas back and the Turanic heritage. After this speech, the Bosnian-Hungarian Muslims marched to Buda "in well-organized four lines under the Mufti's leadership", where "one of the ulemas that substituted the muezzin, for the first time after 250 years, sang again the sad Arabic call for prayer in a halting voice. (...) From now on, this call for prayer will be performed every Friday." This day, Ali Nassir Bedawi pasha

came from Vienna to Buda and negotiated, among others, with Durics Hilmi, as well.¹⁹

The Buda Diary reported its readers in an edition of 1931 that the Islamic catechism, written by Durics Hilmi, will also be on the list of school books. It is also reported in the Buda Diary's edition, dated on 1 September 1931 that many Western and Arabic papers spoke about the Muslims' celebration of St. Stephen's day. It also relates that a commission will visit the Wagner Castle built around the shrine upon the invitation of the Gül Baba Culture Committee which operates and supports the Muslim community. The investigation is focused on the possibilities and the method of constructing the community Mosque and Islamic educational centres.²⁰

Durics Hilmi Hussein and his congregation were received letters of congratulations and telegrams from the Muslim world and they intended to publish them all to gain more popularity. Their Christian supporters regarded this small Muslim community as business opportunity. If a Muslim maharaja, a rheumatic Indian politician or an Egyptian businessman spent some days in Budapest, the Buda Diary welcomed them with enthusiasm and also reproached the official authorities why they did not use these opportunities from the Buda thermal baths to Durics.²¹

There were also great projects and designs made on the Buda Islam bastion and centre. The first plans were made by Ferenc Suppinger, Architect in 1931 and our years later a large-scale project, that included a mosque, a college and an boarding school connected to it, was prepared by Lóránd Lechner, well-known Architect in 1935. Based on the project, Durics Hilmi could imagine himself as the Emir of a Muslim district or city and the chief supporter, An-

(18) Buda Diary, 1931.8.25. p. 1.

(19) Bolek: Ibid.

(20) See more: Bolek: Ibid. Lederer: Ibid.

(21) Lederer: Ibid

dor Medriczky, dreamt about becoming a wealthy man.

In the meantime, the Muslims of Hungary held the fasting of Ramadan, regardless that it did not start with much celebration and grandeur. As the Buda Diary narrated: *"This time, the only symbol of the fasting, inaugurated with much celebration all over the world, in Buda was a spread praying carpet, a small praying table behind which the sheik dressed in black was standing together with his assistant and the religious leader of the community, named after Gül Baba. Hilmi Hussein, Great Mufti of Buda, and the Imam, Ismail Mechmed-agics, on his knees. First, the Quran was recited, then, the great mufti told a compassionate prayer for the governor and the resurrection of Hungary. The audience got moved by the frank words and the remonstrance of the chief-mufti to lead a God-fearing life, loyalty to one's country and honest, altruist life."*²²

In February 1932, István Bárczy, retired Minister of Justice and ex-Chief-Mayor who was elected as patron (mufatis) to the Hungarian-Bosnian Muslims, met Durics Hilmi Hussein and his companions. Bárczy accepted this responsibility and promised to support the community. Durics Hilmi decided to try to get the support of Zogu, king of Albania, to the Hungarian Muslims and set off towards Tirana through Vienna and Trieste. Reports relate that local Muslims welcomed him with great respect at all the stations. King Zogu approved of the request of patronage in the Hungarian Muslims' case. However, he did not do anything for the Bosnian-Hungarian community until his dismissal. He decorated Hilmi with a medal, commander medallion of Skander Beg with diamond stars, but nothing else has happened. Hilmi was on visitation to the King of Albania, Zogu, and a high mass was also held prior to his departure to home. This farewell party took place in the presence of the Ministers of the Alban administration along with the leaders of the economic and religious

life just to demonstrate how seriously Durics and his companions were taken. King Zogu and the Albanian Order of Bektashi offered several thousand golden pengő²³ for the construction of the Buda mosque and the school and this amount would have been transferred after the laying of the foundation. The leader of the Order of Bektashi also gifted a decorated turban to Durics. In the meantime, it was announced that fifty Muslim Albanian students would come to do their studies to the new medress and the administration expressed its wish to make diplomatic contacts with Hungary.²⁴

Dr. Erebara Ali Bey, Zogu king's personal representative visited Hungary in July, 1932 and he also took part in several official meetings, had a personal discussion with Hilmi as well, but the Muslims of Hungary only got promises. The year of 1932 seemed to be outstanding from a Muslim point of view as Chekib Arslan, Emir of Syria and Chairman of "Comité syrio-palestinien" also paid a visit to Hungary. The Emir participated in many official meetings and spent most of his time with Durics. Buda Diary reports that it was his fifth visit to Hungary. Regardless the emir's promises, however, this visit did not have the expected results from an economic point of view.

Ramadan was celebrated separately in Hungary as the Turks were lead by their Imam, Abdul Latif. The Buda Diary narrated about it in its edition of 28 January 1933, as follows: *"Hilmi Hussein held the worships of Ramadan in his flat. Abdul Latif, the old Imam, spoke about Allah's truth in Mecset street. Only Allah knows who the real Imam is."*²⁵

The division was gradually growing between the two communities and they attacked each other in un-Islamic ways in different press releases several times and had

(22) Lederer: Ibid.

(23) Official currency of Hungary (1927-1946).

(24) Lederer: Ibid Bolek: Ibid.

(25) Buda Diary, 1933.01.28. p. 1.

their supporters represent them. The general public just smiled at these arguments but Durics was more backed owing to his past and Hungarian citizenship.

In all cases, Durics and his companions referred to the laws of 1895 and 1916 in accordance with which only a Hungarian citizen can be religious leader and to the really important fact that he, himself, was unanimously elected by all the Muslims of Hungary, may they be Bosnians or Albanians, most of them in possess of a Hungarian citizenship. He also rejected that the Muslims of Hungarian origins are parted into two. However, it was a fact that the majority of Turks supported Abdul Latif.

In February 1932, Durics and his companions celebrated the "Seker-Bayram." The feast was held in Hotel Espelade, where Durics was given a suite so that he could accept his foreign friends in proper conditions. Several well-known personalities of Hungarian social life participated in the feast. It shall be noted that Professor Gyula Germanus, who had already embraced Islam, was also present and held a conference to the participants. Since Hilmi and his friends also sacrificed a lamb and offered a prayer together. However, the great mufti of Buda awaited the financial support promised earlier in vain, the year 1932 only had unfulfilled promises.²⁶

In 1933 the contemporary press relates all the feasts of the Hungarian-Bosnian Muslims again and the Buda Diary vividly describes the visitors of high rank. This year the conflict renewed between the Hungarian Muslims lead by Hilmi and the Turkish Muslims lead by Abdul Latif owing to the start of the month of Ramadan. After Ramadan, Chekib Arslan, Emir of Syria, on his way to Geneva where a Pan-Islamic congress was held, paid another visit to Budapest in 1934 who was treated with special attention by Durics, however, the visit only kept promises. The emir was also hosted by the Hollós

Mátyás Society that also supported the case of the Hungarian Muslims.

In 1934 Durics and Ismail Mehmedagics had already travelled to Egypt, Syria and Palestine. Hadj Amin al-Husseini, the head of the Pan Islamic Congress and Adolf Hitler's later friend, made them promises related to the East. Durics and his companions set out for a second trip with the hope of getting real financial support instead of promises.

They left for Alexandria, Jerusalem, Damascus, Baghdad, Bombay and Haiderabad in 1935. Hilmi held several conferences during their journey of several months and the local papers wrote a lot about him and the case of Islam in Hungary, they were also welcomed by the local aristocracy and sovereigns like the King of Iraq and the Nizâm (local monarch) of Haiderabad. But they only returned with promises again. "*We had no financial success in Arabia...*" wrote Mehmedagics in his diary.²⁷ It is obvious that the Abdul Latif's intrigues also contributed to the failure of their journey. The press interviews made with Durics demonstrate that he hoped that financial promises made by the Eastern Muslim sovereigns regarding the construction of the Islamic centre would come true. It is well know that he had to loan money for his trips and he had serious problems with his creditors after his arrival to Hungary.

After all this failure, Durics turned to Zogu, King of Albania again who was also elected as the patron of Hungarian Islam and he also gifted him a model of the future mosque, evaluated to 450 pengös by the Hungarian Customs, along with a small pocket of soil from around the shrine. This memory model was taken to a museum under the reign of Enver Hodja and was handed over to the leader of the Albanian Bek-tashi Order where it is still exhibited. In the meantime, Mussolini was also proclaimed

(26) See more: Bolek: Ibid.

(27) Bolek: Ibid.

as the patron of Hungarian Islam. One may recall the negotiations with the Libyans. The Buda Diary says that It was Durics who celebrated the marriage ceremony of King Zogu and Countess Geraldine Apponyi, as Durics had been assigned as the Great Mufti of his Court. Destiny has funny games: Mussolini, patron of Hungarian Islam, chased Zogu, King of Albania, the other patron of Hungarian Islam, from the throne. So, Durics and his companions lost yet another hope.

After so much disappointment, Andor Medreczky, Officer of the Budapest Municipality and one of the main supporter of Durics and his followers kept on supporting the idea of Eastern tourism but with less enthusiasm and he also forgot to mention Durics's name. He had hard feelings for him because Durics had joined the far-right National Front, a fact Medreczky did not prefer as his views were closer to those of conservative Bárczy.

The Muslims – Hungarian-Bosnians and the Turks – celebrated the Seker and Kurban bayrams independently from each other. In the thirties Muslims and non-Muslims supported the idea of pulling up a Mosque around Gül Baba's shrine or its renovation and the demolition of Wagner Castle adjacent to it.

In 1936 Béla Viraág, Chief Editor died and he was followed by Gyula Lippay, while the Buda Diary was replaced by the Buda Chronicles and none of them seemed to be supporters of the case of Islam even if some articles were published on it. Durics Hilmi Hussein died of his pneumatic illness in János Hospital, Budapest on 4 February 1940. He died at the age of 52, a quiet early age.²⁸ His obituary appeared on the pages of the 7 February 1940 of the Buda Chronicles. His personality was praised along with his active participation in all the community events and supported the improvement of the touristic sector. *"He was not an ordinary person. He was driven by great projects and ideas. And if*

he determined something, he also carried it out. He did not care about obstacles, nor difficulties. He took a trip to the East twice to promote his ideas related to Buda with his personal attraction and his wonderful propaganda of his words: the construction of Gül Baba Mosque, the set-up of Muslim Academy e cultural centre. He visited the Court of Arab principles and kings, he travelled to Egypt, India and he encouraged and agitated for his case and achieved that large sums would be available to reach his goals, if once... This »if once« was the cause and the purpose of his fights and sadness."²⁹ In 1946, his eternal enemy, Abdul Latif, was also dead. Both of them were buried in Rákoskeresztúr New Cemetery, Kozma street, Budapest in the parcel destined to Muslims, very close to each other.

Andor Medreczky escaped from the Soviet troops in 1944 and his further life story is unknown. However, he had handed over a large file of key-note documents, press articles, materials of Hungarian-Bosnian community to Dr. Lajos Kovács, chief archivist.³⁰ Among the Muslims of Budapest who cooperated with Durics for the case of Hungarian Islam, Csátics Abid was the last who died in April 1977 at an elderly home of Újpest, Budapest. There was nobody who would have told the Fatiha above his grave as he had done to his Muslim brothers, Hajdics Hajdar, Mulics Szalko, Szlatinovics Muharem, Zuko Szulejmán who died earlier. Mehmet Raszu-
lovics, Fencer Trainer who had left for Vienna after 1956 Revolution, died in Vienna, capital of Austria. The world-famous Muslim Orientalist and Writer Professor Gyula Germanus (Hajji Abdul-Kerim Germanus) (b.1884) died in Budapest on 7 November 1979.

The year 1949 indicates a period in the history of Hungary that did not favor ecclesiastical development and the practice of any religions. This affected smaller communities

(28) See more on Durics's funeral: <http://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=3665> Accessed on 3 August 2017.

(29) See more: Lederer: Ibid.

(30) So-called "Medreczky-dosszié"

of unclear status more than well-known, large religions, regardless that differences between adopted and admitted communities were cancelled by the Legislation of the Republic of Hungary in 1947. Gyula Ortutay, Minister of Religion and Public Education held a speech on it at the Parliament of Hungary in this occasion: *"It shall be noted, as a point of interest, that the Article No. 17. of 1916 that proclaimed Muslims as an admitted community, that only had around 300 members, due to the political requirements of World War I. However, this approval has not yet rendered it necessary the setup of an admitted Islamic religious community here in Hungary. It also demonstrates how much Churches depended on the State and how many benefits these Churches gained from their dependence on the State and how much they relied on it."*³¹ There are some who argue how much this dependence reduced from 1947 when Act No. 33 was approved. From 1947 it was not permitted to practice Islam in Hungary, its followers were discriminated and exposed to persecution. Durics' companions went to offer their prayer at Gül Baba's shrine secretly until 1956 Hungarian Revolution.

5. Brief Summary of the Present Situation

The predecessor of the Hungarian Islamic Community (MIK) was established by the Hungarian, Bosnian and Albanian muslims of the country in 1931. At the end of the Communism the MIK obtained state license on 15 August 1988 and became a state recognized religious institution and this license was confirmed again in 1990. Zoltán Bolek has been the Chairman of MIK since 1996 (except for a short period). The vice president is István Tóth since 2010. Current imam is Ahmed Miklós Kovács. MIK has branches in Budapest, Győr, Debrecen and Siklós.

Main projects and activities of the MIK: the Mosque is opened for the five dai-

ly prayers, Salah Jumaa, regular sadaqa for the muslims in need (especially clothing and food), periodical sadaqa for the non-muslims in need, free summer camp for the muslim children, Islamic teaching (Quran, Tajweed, Aqeedah, Fiqh) in the mosque, regular maintenance of the muslim cemetery in Budapest, research for Islamic historical places in Hungary, research of the history of Islam in Hungary, maintaining mosques and opening new mosques, sister's club with activities, Iftar and Taraweeh prayers in Ramadan, organizing Hajj and Umrah to Mecca, collecting the yearly Zakat, Dawah, teaching new muslims, Salah Jumaa and teaching Muslims in prisons with the official permission of the Hungarian Government, legal and social aid and teaching in refugee camps, operating charity services, founding Islamic elementary and high school, Sadaqa projects in Islamic countries (Iraq, 2003; Sudan, 2004-2007; Syria, 2007, 2013; Pakistan, 2005, 2009; Indonesia, 2005, after Tsunami; Palestina-Gaza, 2009; Lybia, 2011), printing and translation of Islamic books, maintaining official internet website (<http://magyariszlam.hu/>), maintaining and developing good relationship with the Hungarian parliamentary parties and ministries, maintaining and developing international relationship with other Islamic and non-Muslim communities and organizations.³²

The Association of Islamic Students (Iszlám Diákok Egyesülete), was founded as a non-governmental organization a year before MIK, in 1987. This association was partially a community and an organisational predecessor of the Organisation of Muslims in Hungary (Magyarországi Muszlimok Egyháza, MME), established in 2000. Its two branch centres are located in Szeged and Pécs. The leader of the organisation is a Hungarian, Zoltán Sulok, and members include a high proportion of non-Hungarian members.

(31) Országgyűlési Napló 1947-51. 24-25. II. 31. 1947. december 4.

(32) See more: <http://magyariszlam.hu/angol/index.html> Accessed on 3 August 2017.

The third organisation, Islamic Church (Iszlám Egyház, IE) was founded in 2003 by a small number of believers who split from the MME and its centre is the Dar-as-Salam Mosque in Budapest. The religious leader is thought to be Tayseer Saleh, who is of Palestinian origin. The IE is currently operating as an association and not as recognized church.

Due to the situation caused by an amendment of law in 2011, the Muslim organisations were forced to cooperate and the two larger organisations (MIK and MME) established the Hungarian Islamic Council (Magyarországi Iszlám Tanács). This (currently unregistered) organisation represents Hungarian Muslims pursuant to the law, but the two founding organisations are also considered legitimate representatives of Muslims. Besides there are also numerous Muslim organisations among NGOs.³³

“Freedom of religion is a constitutional right in Hungary and a small, yet well established, Muslim community can be found within the country totalling approximately 32,000 (some argue the figure is much higher, 40,000- 50,000). The majority of Hungary’s Muslim population lives in Budapest and as a result, a number of Islamic places of worship can be found across the city.

Hungarian law dictates that legally recognized religious organizations are referred to as »Churches« and therefore enjoy church status and the benefits which come along with this. State protection and financial benefits are just a few examples: religious organisations with church status can, for example, receive a 1% tax contribution each working resident of Hungary may choose to donate.

In 2011, the government introduced the divisive »Law on the Right to Freedom of Conscience and Religion, and on Churches, Religions and Religious Communities«. Under the law, a religious group must meet certain criteria in order to qualify for legal church status. Primarily, they must have exist-

ed in Hungary for at least 20 years, and must count at least 10,000 members in their ranks. Controversially, the group must also reach a 2/3 majority in a parliamentary vote on their recognition. This meant that smaller minority denominations of Islam were particularly vulnerable as members of Parliament could effectively decide which religions they liked – and which they didn’t.

The law did not specifically outlaw or discriminate against any one religion, but by restricting those groups which could qualify for the benefits of legal status it became harder for many churches to survive – in particular, smaller religious groups which could not meet the strict requirements, including a number of Islamic communities around the country.

Hungary’s new »Law on the Right to Freedom of Conscience and Religion, and on Churches, Religions and Religious Communities« was enacted 12 July 2011 and it recognized only 14 religious groups. Islam was not included in this list and Muslims had to apply to get official recognition under the new law. Under the law, only 14 of 358 registered churches and religious associations was granted legal recognition, while others had to reapply for legal registration after two-thirds approval in parliament. On 27 February 2012, Hungary’s parliament amended the country’s controversial law on religious organizations to expand the list of officially recognized the Hungarian Islamic Council (founded by the Hungarian Islamic Community and the Organisation of Muslims in Hungary).³⁴

Nowadays Islamic churches in the country face challenging times. However, at

(33) Norbert Pap-Reményi Péter-M. Császár Zsuzsa-Végh Andor: Islam and the Hungarians. In: Mitteilungen der Österreichischen Geographischen Gesellschaft, 156. Jg. Wien 2014. p. 208. In: http://www.academia.edu/20777531/Islam_and_the_Hungarians_-_Mitteilungen_der_Osterreichischen_Geographischen_Gesellschaft_156_Jg_Wien_2014_pp_191-220 Accessed on 1 August 2017.

(34) Officially recognized churches in Hungary. See: <http://egyhazi.emmi.gov.hu/> Accessed on 3 August 2017.

present Hungary's mosques provide important places of worship for the country's small Muslim population and can be visited by those curious to learn more about the country's rich Islamic history."³⁵

Conclusion

The situation of contemporary Hungarian Islamic communities are difficult due to the migration crisis in Europe, the growing Islamophobic tendencies in the country, the lack of financial support and the fact that they belong to such a religious community that looks strange to a Hungarian person. All this was crowned by the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, whose brutality and the shocking press images put the question:

Is Islam equal to terrorism? The Hungarian communities' reply is a categorical NO! They truly and deeply share the pain with the victims' family, not talking about the high number of Muslim victims. They are deeply against all violent actions committed in the name of Islam, they condemn anti-Semitism and all actions done to intimidate or subjugate others. They wish to cooperate with all NGOs which contradict violence and work for social peace and the elimination of social differences. They do not want to build walls but destroy them between Muslims and Non-Muslims and they would like to live with each other in peace.

(35) Alex Mackintosh: A Brief History of Hungary's Controversial 'Islamic Churches' in: <https://theculturetrip.com/europe/hungary/articles/a-brief-history-of-hungarys-controversial-islamic-churches/> Accessed on 1 August 2017.