

The Budapest Imam: An Attempt to Integrate the Bosnian Muslims (1909–1911)

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Budapeşte İmamı: Bosna Müslümanları'nı Entegre Etme Girişimi (1909–1911)

Öz ■ 20. yüzyılın ilk yıllarında, Bosna Macaristan'ın büyük-güç statüsü elde etme planlarında giderek daha da önemli bir yer tutuyordu. Macar hükümeti, bu vilayeti Macar Kralliyet Tacı'nın kadim hakkına dayanarak İmparatorluk'a bağlamak istiyor ve Bosna'yı Macar iktisadî nüfuz sahasına dahil ederek tedricen Macar devletinin kontrolü altına almayı hedefliyordu. Bu stratejinin bir parçası olarak, virane haldeki Gül Baba Türbesi'ni camiye ve bir hac yerine çevirmeye, ayrıca şehirde yaşayan ya da ziyarete gelen Türk ve Bosnalı Müslümanlara hizmet etmek üzere birleşmiş bir Müslüman cemaat oluşturmaya karar verdi. Bu cemaate liderlik etmek üzere Türkiye'den bir imam ve Bosna'dan bir müezzin getirilecekti. Teklif edilen caminin ve hac yerinin etrafındaki binaların satın alınması ve restore edilmesiyle bir yatılı okul tesis edilebilecek; Türk (Osmanlı) hükümeti, Macar Hükümeti ve Budapeşte Belediyesi tarafından tahsis edilecek burslar aracılığıyla orada en az 30 Türk ve Boşnak öğrenci tahsil görecekti. Bunlar, Macar-Boşnak-Türk entelektüellerden iktisadî ve kültürel ilişkileri geliştirecek tohumlar olacaktı. Ne var ki, İstanbul'dan getirilen imam Abdüllatif Efendi beklentileri karşılamadı ve Macaristan'da bir Müslüman cemaat oluşturma çabaları boşa çıkarken hükümet de gerekli altyapıyı sağlamaya muktedir olamadı. Böylece, Bosna'nın Macar dünyasıyla dinî ve entelektüel bütünleşmesi gerçekleşmemiştir. Macar Meclisi'nin Ocak 1916'da İslam'ı resmî bir din olarak tanıma yönünde aldığı kararsa bu girişimin eldeki tek önemli getirisi olmuştur.

Anahtar kelimeler: Avusturya-Macaristan Monarşisi; Osmanlı İmparatorluğu; Bosna; Bosnalı Müslümanlar ve onların Monarşiyle bütünleşmesi; Budapeşte'de bir Müslüman cemaatinin oluşturulması; Macaristan'da İslam'ın resmî bir din olarak tanınması.

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The Eastern Question was a prominent theme in nineteenth-century international affairs. The question was essentially: how could the national aspirations of peoples within the Ottoman Empire be satisfied without the empire being broken up? Or if break-up was unavoidable, how could the balance of the great powers be maintained without a general war?¹ One response was the 1878 Treaty of Berlin, which concluded the Balkan wars of the preceding years. This left Ottoman control of the Balkans in place, but in a greatly weakened condition. Among the changes that were most painful to Istanbul was the great powers' award of Bosnia-Herzegovina, an area of 50,000 km², to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. (They also granted Austria-Hungary the right to maintain a military presence in the Sanjak of Novibazar, an area of about 10,000 square kilometres).² The army of the Monarchy completed its military invasion of Bosnia-Herzegovina under this mandate by autumn 1878.³

The Hungarian political elite and the Hungarian public were generally sympathetic to the Turks and resolutely opposed the occupation. Subsequently, however, the Hungarian leadership attached increasing prominence to Bosnia in their plans for great-power status, particularly in the early twentieth century.⁴ Béni Kállay, the joint minister of finance, who also governed Bosnia between 1882 and 1903 and was held by Lajos Thallóczy, one of the intellectual prime movers of Hungarian Balkan policy, to be the “founder” of Bosnia, hinted at the opportunities for Hungary in possessing the area. Kállay envisioned the Monarchy taking charge of trade in “European Turkey”. He wanted Hungary to control the Balkan agricultural exports and “bring in raw produce from the Ottoman Empire for manufactures that we would take to them. This would undoubtedly reap the

1 Eric J. Zürcher, *Turkey. A Modern History* (London–New York: I. B. Tauris, 2004³), pp. 38–39, 55–56, 72, 103–106, 143–147.

2 István Diószegi, *Bismarck és Andrássy. Magyarország a német hatalmi politikában a XIX. század második felében* (Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 1998), pp. 309–317, esp. 311.

3 László Bencze, *Bosznia és Hercegovina okkupációja 1878-ban* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1987). The invasion of Sanjak of Novibazar took place in September 1879: Bencze, *Bosznia és Hercegovina*, p. 221.

4 On the view of Bosnia and Islam in Hungary at the time, see György Léderer, “A magyarországi iszlám újabb kori történetéhez (I. rész),” *Keletkutatás*, 1988. ősz, pp. 29–39. On the cautious policy of the Monarchy, taking account of local affairs and Muslim sensitivities in every area, see Zoltán Fónagy, “Bosznia-Hercegovina integrációja az okkupáció után. Hatalompolitika és modernizáció a közös minisztertanácsi jegyzőkönyvek tükrében,” *Történelmi Szemle*, 66 (2014):1, pp. 27–60.

greatest profits for us.” Kállay wanted Hungarian manufacturing industry, with strong government backing, to develop the capability of “meeting these areas’ needs with its products”.⁵

In the opening decade of the twentieth century, Bosnia became a key factor in strengthening the internal cohesion of the Monarchy. The joint foreign minister from 1906, Aerenthal, identified what he thought were the best ways of keeping the two halves of the empire together: Austria by deepening the customs union, and Hungary by allowing its expansion within the empire through the acquisition of Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁶ This led to the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in October 1908, which set off an international crisis. The intellectual driving force behind this move was the joint minister of finance, István Burián, who was also the minister in administrative charge of the two provinces. For its part, the Hungarian government under Sándor Wekerle was of the view that the province should be joined to the empire by virtue of the ancient right of the Hungarian crown. Gyula Andrassy, of the Constitutional Party, supported annexation with some reservations, mainly concerning the view that the Ottoman Empire

5 The quotations are from Lajos Thallóczy’s memoirs, written in 1912 for internal use: *A Balkán-félszigeten beállott változásokkal szemben Magyarország részéről követendő eljárás kulturális és gazdaságpolitikai téren* [The procedures Hungary should follow in the cultural and economic areas in response to the changes in the Balkan peninsula] (Budapest: Magyar Királyi Állami Nyomda), 1912, p. 8. The memoir is held in: A Magyarországi Református Egyház Zsinati Levéltára. 45. fond. Burián István iratai; 10.43. Thallóczy emlékirata (handwritten entry on the first page: “Manuscript. Confidential, for private use only”). Also held in: Országos Széchényi Könyvtár (hereinafter: OSZK), Kézirattár, Fol. Hung. 1900. ff. 1–249/2. The manuscript was read by Sándor Wekerle, István Tisza and István Burián. Kállay’s memoirs were written in 1873 during his time as Belgrade consul. On Kállay’s career and ideas, see Imre Ress, “Kállai Béni bosnyák nemzetteremtési kísérlete,” Imre Ress, *Kapcsolatok és keresztutak. Horvátok, szerbek, bosnyákok a nemzetállam vonzásában* (Budapest: L’Harmattan), 2004, pp. 243–254; Károly Dán, “Kállay Béni és a magyar imperializmus,” *Aetas*, 15 (2000):1–2, pp. 220–248; on the Kállay regime in Bosnia, see also Robin Okey, *Taming Balkan Nationalism. The Habsburg ‘Civilizing Mission’ in Bosnia, 1878–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

6 István Diószegi, “Bosznia-Hercegovina annexiója. Aerenthal külpolitikája. Az annexió”, *Magyarország története 1890–1918*, editor-in-chief Péter Hanák, ed. Ferenc Mucsi (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó), 1978, pp. 749–757; István Dolmányos, “Az annexió magyarországi fogadtatása. A koalíciós kormány felelőssége”, *Ibid.*, pp. 757–761. The annexation was from the outset a tacit objective of the Monarchy; see Fónagy, “Bosznia-Hercegovina integrációja,” pp. 29–30.

should be maintained as long as possible. The Hungarian elite of that time clearly supported the policy of bringing into the Hungarian economic sphere of influence and gradually under Hungarian state control. Burián raised the chances of incorporating Bosnia into the Hungarian state by relying on the legal principle that annexation had taken place by right of the Hungarian crown and thus, in terms of state law, Bosnian provincial institutions and their staff could not be regarded as being under joint Monarchy authority; consequently, they should not be designated as “k.u.k.” (*kaiserlich und königlich*, i.e. imperial and royal) but as “Bosnian-Herzegovinian”, which better expressed their separate status.

Burián was ousted in February 1912, and Aehrenthal died at the same time. The principle was set aside by Aehrenthal’s successor, the Austrian-Polish Leon Biliński. To the outrage of *schwarz-gelb* [black-yellow]-minded officer corps, Biliński declared first the Bosnian regular regiments and subsequently other Bosnian institutions under joint (k.u.k.) control. There was similar rivalry in the economic sphere. The Hungarian Commercial Bank of Pest got ahead of the Austrians, proposing the foundation of its own agricultural and commercial bank in Bosnia to manage the process of abolishing the Bosnian *kmetsvo*, a potential source of large profits.⁷ With Burián’s permission, the bank started operations in 1909, and a counter-attack by the Austrian banks followed shortly afterwards. This eventually required the intervention of Emperor Francis Joseph, who postponed the abolition issue and the commencement of banking operations until the convocation of the new provincial diet. The bankers on the two sides proved unable to reach agreement on the issue before 1914.⁸ Some were more prudent, such as Lajos Thallóczy, *Sektionschef* (today: state secretary) in the joint ministry of finance, who clearly saw that the two sides of the empire could fulfil their calling “only by working shoulder to shoulder”, and “the overall operation of the two states must be understood as *getrennt marschieren, vereint schlagen* [march separately, beat together]. To follow this principle will be to benefit both parties”.⁹

Besides economic interests, foreign policy considerations also favoured the strengthening of Hungary’s intellectual and political influence. Lajos Thallóczy, true to his “*getrennt marschieren*” motto, summed these up in a submission of 1

7 See also Okey, *Taming Balkan Nationalism*, pp. 53, 137, 179, 190.

8 Krisztián Csaplár-Degovics and Lumnije Jusufi, *Die kritische Edition des ersten Albanisch-Ungarischen Wörterbuches von dr. Zoltán László (1913)* (forthcoming). I would like to thank the Hungarian author for providing me with the manuscript.

9 Thallóczy, *A Balkán-félszigeten*, p. 2.

October 1908: “We (the Hungarian government!) must engage intensively with Bosnia and Herzegovina. We must be thoroughly familiar with the affairs and personal circumstances of the two provinces. We must know all the facts of past governance and get involved, with real effect, in the establishment of the institutions that are now in prospect. We must not rely on paper laws but on statesman-like, *well-intentioned influence*. *Let us not argue the question of citizenship but employ Bosnians in Hungarian service wherever possible*. Let us regard them as de facto Hungarian citizens, and if they come here, *sweeten them to Budapest*, have some regard for them in our institutions, and take temporary measures. Judiciously, discreetly, let us arouse interest in these countries here, in the press, in literature, in schools. And along with this, let us make closer scrutiny of the whole South Slav question, *which if it gains strength, will inevitably lead to the cantonization of Hungary*. We should give greater backing to Croatian elements in Budapest and make close scrutiny of Croatian affairs, in which we must involve ourselves – but not in the sense of official influence. Make a thorough study of Serbian affairs, from first hand, and operate concentratedly. For Hungary, this is one of the major foreign issues.”¹⁰

The Austrian ministry of culture was also aiming to win over the Bosnians. Prompted by the determined propaganda of Friedrich Funder, editor of the prominent Christian Socialist newspaper *Reichspost*, it drew up plans for official recognition of Islam as a religious denomination. News of this development, which reached the Hungarian leadership at the end of 1908, inspired the prime minister, Sándor Wekerle, to devise a scheme to steal a march in Bosnian affairs. At his customary pork dinner and cards party on 1 January 1909, he told Thallóczy, as the latter recorded in his diary, that “he is preparing a coup in the Bosnian dispute, namely he wants me to find a hodja from Constantinople, and a müezzín, for the tomb of Gül Baba. He [the Hungarian government] will find the wages. At this I immediately instructed Imre Karácson, our agent in Gospoli [sic].”¹¹

10 Márta Tömöry, “Bosznia-Hercegovina annektálásának történetéből (Részletek Thallóczy Lajos naplójából),” *Századok*, 100 (1966):4–5, p. 896, note 46. Strengthening Hungarian influence in Bosnia also involved ethnic encouragement of the (very small) Hungarian community there. On this, see Béla Makkai, “A magyar kormányzat „boszniai actio”-ja (1909–1919),” *Századok*, 130 (1996):2, pp. 341–381.

11 Tömöry, “Bosznia-Hercegovina annektálásának”, pp. 908–909. “Gospoli” here stands for “Constantinople”, and must have been Thallóczy’s own abbreviation or misspelling.

The idea went through many changes in the following weeks, months and years, as can be traced in the stream of documents it gave rise to. Essentially, the Hungarian government intended to convert the tomb of Gül Baba, which was in somewhat dilapidated condition, into a mosque and place of pilgrimage. This would allow the establishment of a Muslim congregation for the Turkish and Bosnian Muslims resident in or visiting the city. It would be led by a hodja or imam brought in from Turkey and a müezzín from Bosnia. The buildings adjacent to the refurbished place of pilgrimage and the new mosque would be purchased and renovated as premises for a boarding school for at least thirty Turkish and Bosnian boys. Their studies would be financed by scholarships from the Ottoman government, the Hungarian government, the joint ministry of finance and the city of Budapest, and they would be the seeds of future intellectual, economic and cultural relations among Hungarians, Bosnians and Turks.¹²

The scheme also required legislation to recognize Islam in Hungary, for which the preparatory work drew on the experience of codifying the equivalent law in Austria. (An initial attempt to recognize Islam under Act XLIII of 1895 on freedom of religion ran into difficulties. For example, owing to the lack of a sufficient number of Muslims with Hungarian citizenship, the religious needs of soldiers in the Bosnian regular regiment stationed in Budapest were cited as grounds for setting up a congregation. There were also problems in reconciling polygamy with Hungarian law.) Burián, the joint minister of finance, initially wanted the new mosque's Muslim congregation to comprise Bosnians alone, while Wekerle, the prime minister, insisted on involving the Turks (which is why he pressed for the invitation of a hodja/imam from Constantinople).¹³ This would assuage the Turkish public, who had been enraged about the annexation, and show the good intentions of the Hungarian government.¹⁴ The "invitation" to – and proposed recognition of – Turks and Bosnians together was also aimed at appeasing the dissatisfaction of the Turcophile Hungarian Independence Party, who had con-

12 The documents: Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár (National Archives of Hungary, hereinafter: MNL), K 26-1911-XLI-1886. One of the best and most concise summaries of the plan put forward here is an aide-mémoire, see *ibid.*, 6467/XI/11/1910M.E.

13 Tömöry, "Bosznia-Hercegovina anektálásának," p. 909.

14 On this, see *Báró Burián István naplói, 1907–1922, báró Burián István távirati könyvei, 1913–1915 a Magyarországi Református Egyház Zsinati Levéltárában*, ed. Erzsébet Horváth and Sándor Tenke (Budapest: Ráday Könyvtár, 1999), p. 18, which records that Burián had several discussions with Wekerle about the compensation that the Ottoman Empire should receive for the annexation.

demned the government for failing to set up an independent national bank or pass the long-awaited and demanded enlistment law. The gesture to the Ottomans was also probably meant to prepare the ground for settling a sensitive political issue: the Ottoman state was in arrears of repayment of an 1833 loan, and the Hungarian government intended to ask for the island of Adakale on the Lower Danube in exchange for waiving the final instalment. (This took place in 1913.)

This was the background to the “imam project” that started after Wekerle’s New Year dinner party. At his instruction, Thallóczy wrote to Imre Karácson, who had already been living in Istanbul for nearly two years. Karácson was a Catholic priest who, in the Turcophile atmosphere at the turn of the century, was inspired to train as a Turcologist, after which he made several journeys to the East and learned good Ottoman Turkish. In 1907, an unprecedented opportunity arose to research the Istanbul archives, resulting from the warm relations that had developed during negotiations between the Hungarian and Ottoman governments about how the ashes of Imre Thököly and Ferenc Rákóczi, Hungarian leaders of anti-Habsburg revolts at the turn of the eighteenth century who had died in exile in Turkey, could be repatriated. Thallóczy’s office sent Karácson to carry out the research.¹⁵ At Thallóczy’s instructions, Karácson approached Grand Mufti (*şeyhülislam*) Cemaleddin, the head of the “estate” of religious scholars, and told him (to quote Karácson’s letter to the prime minister of 6 January 1909):

“...the Honourable Mr Thallóczy has requested me to proceed as quickly as possible in the matter of employing a Turkish hodja at the Gülbaba mosque in Budapest and to report to Your Excellency without delay.

I received Mr Thallóczy’s letter yesterday, and this afternoon I visited His Eminence the Sheykh-ül-Islam, whom I have known since last year, and thus I talked with him for nearly an hour and a half. I told him that the mosque of Gülbaba, the existence of which the Sheykh-ül-Islam was already aware, is an old historic monument and since people from constitutional Turkey are anticipated to travel often to Budapest, and there are soldiers and other Mohammedans who live there permanently, the Hungarian government wishes to express its fondness for the Turks through its willingness to employ a hodja in Budapest who would perform the functions of the imam. And I asked him to recommend a young,

15 István Bene, “Karácson Imre élete és művei (1863–1911),” *Győri Szemle*, 7 (1936), pp. 137–171; Pál Fodor, “Karácson Imre (születésének 125. évfordulóján),” *Keletkutatás*, 1989. tavasz, pp. 109–114.

qualified hodja of good moral standing who will earn respect for the Turkish name there.

The Sheykh-ül-Islam was delighted and grateful to hear the news of the Hungarian government's consideration and kindness. He asked about remuneration, and I gave him the relevant information in accordance with Mr Thallóczy's letter. He said that he was not familiar with our currency and asked me to state the amount in Turkish money, inquiring whether the amount would be sufficient. I reassured him in this regard, and then he declared that he would select one of the best-qualified young hodjas for Budapest. He also expressed a wish to leave the hodja in place for four or five years rather than permanently and then to send another in his place, so that more than one could learn the Hungarian language and become acquainted with Hungarian learning. In his view, this would be of benefit to both Turks and Hungarians, because there would be several hodjas who knew Hungarian language and learning, and the Hungarian nation would have that many good friends.

He asked me to make a report to this effect. We agreed that until further instructions arrived, we would for the time being not give the press any news on the subject. If, however, I receive authorization from Your Excellency to make the matter public, I will immediately deliver the news to the Turkish newspapers.

This is how the matter stands, on which I have ventured to make my report with due heed to the instructions in Mr Thallóczy's letter.

The Sheykh-ül-Islam was eager to talk, and gave his views on many things, particularly the internal affairs of Turkey and on political relations, above all the discord with Austria-Hungary. He also repeatedly mentioned the Turks' friendliness towards the Hungarians, but as for the present hostile current of public opinion, it was hardly surprising if they could not distinguish between Hungarian and Austria in every respect. In his view, this movement, which had emerged against the will of the Turkish government, would subside, and the public only needed some friendly nurturing."¹⁶

The Grand Mufti answered the enquiry within a few days. He offered as the imam of Budapest a thirty-year-old Tiflis-born hodja named Abdullatif, who had completed his training "in the school of the Mohammed Fatih Mosque as a

16 MNL K 26-1911-XLI-1886, 132/I/9/1909.M.E. OSZK Kézirattár, Imre Karácson's letters to Lajos Thallóczy, 1907–1910, no. 46, dated 7 January.

student of the Tabkhane madrasa there. He had a degree in theology and had attended lectures on the humanities in Dar-ül-Fünun (university). He spoke Turkish, Arabic and Persian. He promised to learn Hungarian within a short time. The Sheykh-ül-Islam described him as a commendable hodja of good character. I see him as a man of modest manner, undemanding, well-informed and not fanatical, and truly eager to undertake his appointment to Hungary. He is ready as of today to travel to Hungary immediately, as soon as I communicate Your Excellency's request to him."¹⁷

Abdullatif travelled together with Karácson, arriving in April, and remained in Hungary until he died in 1946.¹⁸ But he did not live his life there exactly as originally envisaged. The other main member of staff of the planned mosque, the müezzin, arrived soon after, a Bosnian named Chirkinagich (nomen est omen: the Turkish word *çirkin* means 'ugly'). The Muslim congregation in Hungary, however, was formed only two decades later, in 1931.¹⁹ Blame for the failure lay to a great extent with the Hungarian government, although the unsuitability of the new arrivals for their task soon became clear. The government was incapable of providing proper funding for the plan. The Gül Baba 'Mosque', as it was then known, was owned by the Wágner family (the tomb by the Ottoman government), and the government could not, or did not want to, pay the steep price for it and the neighbouring properties. The venture thus lacked the requisite infrastructure.²⁰ Within a short time, the unfortunate Abdullatif found himself in a vacuum, and in any case he fell short of expectations both intellectually and morally. As Wekerle wrote to Thallóczy on 1 March 1912: "My Respected Friend! Thank you for your enquiry in our joint operation, the matter of the Turkish

17 MNL K 26-1911-XLI-1886, 132/I/9/1909M.E. Karácson's letter to the prime minister of 10 January 1909.

18 On the life of Abdullatif Efendi, see Nizam Önen, "Budapeşte'de Bir Türk İmam: Abdüllâtif Efendi'nin Hayatı", *Toplumsal Tarih*, 160 (Nisan 2007), pp. 78–81. The author does not touch on the topic of my essay.

19 Andor Medriczky, "A budapesti magyar mohamedán egyházközség megalakulásának jogi előzményei," *Városi Szemle*, 20 (1934), pp. 101–124, particularly pp. 10–104, 120–124; György Léderer, "A magyarországi iszlám újabb kori történetéhez (II. rész)," *Keletkutatás*, 1989. tavasz, pp. 53–72.

20 MNL K 26-1911-XLI-1886, principally 6467/XI/11/1910M.E, etc. On the story of the tomb after the end of Ottoman rule, including the period discussed here, see Gábor Ágoston and Balázs Sudár, *Gül Baba és a magyarországi bektasi dervisek* (Budapest: Terebess Kiadó, 2002), pp. 74–83, 85–96.

priest for Budapest, and for your productive action. Our conception was for there to be a highly qualified and authoritative Turkish priest in Budapest. This idea must be cherished and accomplished. I see that the prime minister's office is endeavouring to the same purpose. We are less interested in the young priest Latif himself, and if we are disappointed in him, let us be rid of him by an appropriate means. If we find him a post in Turkey, give him a few months' severance and his travel or removal costs, he can have no complaint. What we talked about at the time was to bring from Constantinople a virtuous, scholarly Turkish priest who would be held in authority by the Bosnian Mohammedan clergy. That Latif is not exactly virtuous, we discovered quite quickly, his first successful action being the harassment of a chambermaid in Pannónia Hotel... But however things stand now, it is clear that he is incapable of properly fulfilling his post and he should be replaced with someone who comes up to the mark."²¹

But Abdullatif stayed, paid at first by the prime minister's office and after 1912 by the ministry of religious affairs and education, who employed him as a Turkish lecturer at Budapest University. His tasks, as he said himself, were to bring to Hungary the Turkish and Bosnian students who wanted to study abroad, to make the tomb of Gül Baba a known place of pilgrimage, and to build up Turkish–Hungarian friendship and commercial relations. An article in the 21 November 1913 issue of *Budapesti Hírlap* stated that “as the result of his efforts, one hundred and four Turkish students are studying in Hungary this school year, mostly to learn industrial trades. In addition, twelve Turkish students are taking the economics course in Debrecen. The aghas and beys from the annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina, where six hundred thousand Mohammedans live, frequently visit Abdul Latif, who encourages them to learn Hungarian and support Hungarian industry. He has also written articles for Turkish newspapers in Constantinople calling on the carpet dealers and date- and grape-producers of Smyrna to take up business relations with Budapest. His name is known even beyond the Turkish empire, in Egypt and even in India. At his demand, the Mohammedan world is ready to build a splendid mosque in Buda, above the grave of the Turkish saint

21 OSZK Kézirattár Fond XI/1075: letter from Sándor Wekerle to Lajos Thallóczy, 1 March 1912. In 1911, the secretary of the Turkish chief consul in Budapest also informed the prime minister's office of the need for a more suitable person, because Abdullatif was manoeuvring on behalf of the fallen sultan. He did not know Arabic properly, or even Turkish, because he spoke the Laz dialect and was unschooled in literature; see MNL 26-1911-XLI-1886, case no. 7214 XII/13/1911.

Gül Baba, if his position as imam is made official. At the same time as his official position is established, the Mohammedan faith will be accepted. This has gained urgency since the annexation this year of Adakale island, where the population is Turkish. There is as yet no definite opinion regarding how acceptance will be effected.”²²

Abdullatif was therefore no longer officially imam of Budapest, although he did not acknowledge this, if for no other reason than that in July 1916, the Budapest authorities voted to pay him a salary of 5,000 crowns.²³ The actions already taken, however, and of course the fact that Austria had recognized Islam of the Hanafi rite as an official religion in 1912, took their effect. In January 1916, the Hungarian parliament voted to include Islam among recognized confessions, fulfilling the long-held wishes of the Islamic community in Hungary, which in the early years of the war numbered about 2,000.²⁴ The Hungarian leadership undoubtedly took important steps and broke down psychological barriers: Thallóczy records Burián as saying, in February 1909, that “he found it most amusing that he needs a müezzin. For 200 years we have done our best to stop the müezzins shouting, and now we are inviting them.”²⁵ The original vision of the intellectual and religious integration of Bosnia into the Hungarian sphere of interest, however, was not fulfilled. One of the key figures in the story, Imre Karácson, gave a gloomy assessment of the project on 16 September 1909: “Nevertheless, Hungarian laxness and parliamentary bickering in the form of eternal factional struggles have let Bosnia to get out of hand. There is therefore no firm ground on which Hungarian influence in the Balkans could be supported or established.”²⁶

22 *Budapesti Hírlap*, 33:275 (21 November 1913), p. 8.

23 *Budapesti Hírlap*, 36:184 (4 July 1916), p. 12.

24 Medriczky, “A budapesti magyar mohamedán egyházközség,” 104–120; Léderer, “A magyarországi iszlám I.,” 38–39, 48, note 61; Miklós Szalai, “Az 1916. évi VII. [recte XVII.] törvénycikk – Az iszlám vallás legalizálása Magyarországon,” *Történelmi Szemle*, 52 (2010):4, pp. 593–601 (the article consistently refers to the number of the act as VII instead of XVII).

25 Tömöry, “Bosznia-Hercegovina anektálásának,” 912.

26 Imre Karácson, *Konstantinápolyi tartózkodásom főbb eseményei 1907–1908 [–1911]*. Handwritten diary, OSZK Kézirattár, Quart. H. 2651, vol. 2, 68 (16 September 1909).

The Budapest Imam: An Attempt to Integrate the Bosnian Muslims (1909–1911)

Abstract ■ In the early years of the 20th century, Bosnia assumed an increasingly important place in Hungary's plans for great-power status. The aim of the Hungarian government was to connect the province to the Austro-Hungarian Empire by virtue of the ancient right of the Hungarian crown, thereby bringing Bosnia into the Hungarian economic sphere of interest and gradually under the control of the Hungarian state. As part of this strategy, the authorities in Hungary decided to convert the dilapidated tomb of Gül Baba into a mosque and a place of pilgrimage and to set up an associated Muslim congregation for Turkish and Bosnian Muslims living in or visiting the city. A trained hodja, that is, an imam, from Turkey and a müezzín from Bosnia would then lead this congregation. By purchasing and renovating the buildings around the proposed mosque and place of pilgrimage, the Hungarian government would set up a residential school to enable, through scholarships provided by itself, the city of Budapest and the Turkish government, at least thirty Turkish and Bosnian students to study there, and they would be the seeds from which Hungarian–Bosnian–Turkish intellectual, economic and cultural relations would grow. However, the imam brought from Istanbul, Abdullatif, did not live up to expectations, and the government was unable to provide the necessary infrastructure, frustrating the plans for setting up a Muslim congregation in Hungary. The original vision of Bosnia's religious and intellectual integration into the Hungarian sphere thus failed to materialize. The only substantial outcome was the Hungarian Parliament's decision of January 1916 to designate Islam as one of the recognized religions in Hungary.

Keywords: Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Ottoman Empire, Bosnia, Bosnian Muslims, their integration into the Monarchy, setting up a Muslim “denomination” in Budapest, the recognition of Islam as an official religion in Hungary.

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