

The Way Leading to the Translation of the Glorious Qur'ān into Hungarian

A Short Historical and Bibliographical Survey
of the Attempts Made by Hungarians

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In this paper I shall try to present the attempts made by Hungarians in the field of translating the Glorious Qur'ān into Hungarian, with a short relevant introduction about the historical background. This essay does not aim at analyzing these translations, it only makes an effort to give an outline of all the available Qur'ān translations in Hungarian or, in some cases, it gives short samples from the translations accompanied by remarks.

Hungary's history in key words

Hungary is a small country in Central or, we should rather say, in Central-Eastern Europe. Its neighbouring countries are the following ones: Slovakia in the north, Ukraine in the north-east, Romania in the south-east, Serbia and Croatia in the south, Slovenia in the south-west and finally Austria in the west.

Before the Hungarians reached the Carpathian Basin, they were migrant nomadic groups and alliances of smaller tribes. In the earliest times they lived somewhere around the Ural Mountain. However, our knowledge about this period is very poor.

Between the 4th and 5th centuries AD and 830 AD the Hungarian tribes lived in Bashkiria and in the Khazar Khaganate, by the river Volga.

In the early years of the 8th century AD Hungarian tribes moved to a territory between the Volga and Don rivers. This region is called in Hungarian ancient history 'Levedia'. Here, Hungarian tribes were subordinates of the Khazar Khaganate. Then, as a consequence of a local war, seven Hungarian tribes, along with three Kabar¹ tribes

¹ Kabar: Constantinos Porphyrogenetos wrote about them. He mentioned that 'Kabar' (in Greek we have the plural form: κάρβοι) is the name of the three tribes which revolted against the Khazar rule and joined the Hungarian tribes. In Moravcsik: ByzTurc, 2:144.

migrated to Etelköz,¹ the territory between the Carpathians and the Dnieper river. During their stay in these regions, it is probable that Islamic-Muslim cultures, oriental languages and civilizations had influenced the Hungarian language and culture.

In 895 and 896 AD the seven Magyar (Hungarian) tribes entered the Carpathian Basin under the leadership of Prince Árpád and settled down there, i.e. the present territory of Hungary. This historical event is called in Hungarian the 'Honfoglalás'.²

Rule of the Árpád dynasty: Descendants of Prince Árpád began the formation of a country and a state. The early period of this dynasty³ is characterized by the so-called 'államalapítás', i.e. the establishment of the Hungarian kingdom and the politically-forced appearance of Christianity by the state-founder King Stephen I in 1000 or 1001. Another notable personality of this dynasty is King Béla IV (ruled between 1235 and 1270), who after the devastating Tatar invasion, successfully rebuilt the country. This dynasty died out in 1301, leaving the country in desperate and hopeless chaos, characterized by a short period of interregnum between 1301 and 1308.

The Anjou dynasty: The Anjou counts were originally the liege lords of Anjou province. The founder of this dynasty in Hungary is Károly Róbert who ruled between 1308 and 1342.

Beginning of the wars with the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans: This period is characterized by the life and career of Hunyadi János (1407-1456). He was the leader of the famous 'Long Military Campaign' that began in the autumn of 1443 against the expanding Ottoman Empire and its intense attacks on the Balkans, thus forcing the foe back to the Balkan Mountains. His name is remembered by his victory at Nándorfehérvár (now Belgrade) on 21-22 July 1456 against the Ottoman Sultan Mohamed II.

¹ Etelköz: this territory was called in old Hungarian Atelközü, i.e. 'the region between the two rivers'. Greek historical sources mention Hungarians as: turkoi (τουρκοι), hunnoi (Ουννοι), ungroi (Ουγγροι) ca. 838, in *De administrando*, passim. And 'hostes qui ungri vocantur' (enemies called Ungrin), in *Annales Bertiniani*, A. 862. Gombos, *Catalogus* I.111.

² That is "the conquest of the Homeland" by the Seven Hungarian Tribes. They were the following: Kabar, Nyék, Megyer, Kürtgyarmat, Tarján, Jenő, and Keszi.

³ About this dynasty see for example Molnár Endre: *A feudalizmus kialakulása Magyarországon, Az Árpádok kora*, Budapest, 1952.

The Ottoman occupation: This period¹ is introduced in fact by the defeat of the Hungarian army at the Battle of Mohács in 1526. The Ottoman army was led by Sulayman II. To be precise, the Turkish occupation of Hungary (in Hungarian: a török hódoltság) began by the capture of Buda Castle in 1541 and ended on 26 January 1699 by the peace treaty of Karlóca. The Ottoman Empire divided the occupied territory into five *vilayets* (provinces), they were the following: Buda (the Turks called it Budin), Kanizsa², Temesvár³, Nagyvárad⁴ and Eger⁵. The Ottomans built a great number of mosques, castles, baths, Qur'an-schools during their 150-year-long stay in Hungary. Unfortunately, only a very limited number of these buildings survived, such as the minaret of Eger, a Turkish bath in Budapest, and a mosque in Pécs. As far as the religion is concerned, it has no living traces, this may be explained by the fact that the Ottoman rule did not force the acceptance of Islam in the occupied territories.

The Habsburg period: After the withdrawal of the Ottoman forces, there appeared a new threat, they were called in Hungarian 'Labancok' (nickname for pro-Austrian soldiers) and a new occupation began in Hungary, this was the rule of the Habsburgs. This long and humiliating period, after the so-called 'Kiegyezés' (the Compromise)⁶ of 1867, created a new form of rule. This was the Dualistic Era (the period of dual monarchy) between 1867 and 1918. This era was called

¹ This period is fully studied and thoroughly documented, see the short and selected bibliography of this era in the reference section.

² Now Nagykanizsa in the south-west region of Hungary.

³ Now Timișoara in the northern region of Romania.

⁴ Now Oradea in Romania.

⁵ A town in Heves county at the foot of Bükk Mountains. The fortress of Eger was besieged by Ahmad and Ali Pashas on 9 September 1552. Some 2000 men and women defied the overwhelming numerical superiority of the attacking forces and they were the triumphant, led by Commander Dobó István. This show of courage lives in the book of Gárdonyi Géza entitled '*Egri csillagok*' (*Stars of Eger*). Later in 1596 the Ottoman Army successfully attacked and captured the castle.

⁶ The agreement between the Hungarian ruling classes and the Habsburgs, legalized by the law of 1867, article XII. This law referred to the Pragmatic Sanctions of 1723, which stated that: Magyarország és az osztrák örökös tartományok 'feloszthatatlanul és elválaszthatatlanul' tartoznak az osztrák uralom alá, i.e. 'Hungary and the Austrian perennial provinces are subjects of the Habsburg rule "in an indivisible and inseparable way."'

the 'Osztrák-Magyar Monarchia', i.e. the Austro-Hungarian (Dual) Monarchy. After the fall of the dual monarchy on 31 October 1918, there began the modern history of Hungary.

The origin of the word – Hungarian

Hungarian language belongs to the Finno-Ugric family of languages. Some, disputed theories state that the Magyars are either descendents of Scythians, Huns or Avars¹ or even descendents of the ancient Sumerians.²

Hungarians call themselves, in their native language, 'Magyar'³ and its plural form is 'Magyarok'. This designation comes from the name of a tribe that was one of the Seven Conqueror tribes, namely, Megyer. The palatal form is to designate the tribe (Megyer), and its post-palatal or velar version is to designate the nation (Magyar). One has also to remember the fact that Prince Álmos and his son Prince Árpád belonged to Megyer tribe, this may well explain the origin of the name. Magyars are called in western languages by a designation that comes from a different word. The Latin language uses 'Hungarus', English 'Hungarian', French 'Hongrois'. These designations are derived from the Old Turkic 'Onogur' (meaning: Ten tribes).⁴

Overlapping History

There are several phases, shorter or longer periods in Hungary's history, where one can observe different Islamic influences and impacts.

¹ They lived in the Carpathian Basin before the arrival of the Magyar tribes. An equestrian nomadic nation of Turkic-Tatar origin, they established the Avar Empire (567-827) by the Danube river around 565-570 AD. The origin of the name 'Avar' is disputed. Western languages use the Middle Latin 'Avares, Avari', in English: Avar, German: Aware, French: Avare, Italian: Avaro, Russian: авар. See *Historical and Etymological Dictionary of the Hungarian Language*, article: avar.

² For this debate see for example: different books of Károly Rédei and other works mentioned in the References section, at the end of this article.

³ The origin of the word 'magyar' is not clearly defined. In TESz (article 'magyar') we have: ? Μουγελ (corrupted form), ? Μουαγγελιν, (Arabic sources) مجغرية, ? m.ğ.y.rīya, ? m.ħ.f.rīya, "In predio, quod dicitur *Mogioroi*" (who are called *Mogioroi* (Magyars)), "septem principales persone que *Hetumoger* vocantur" (Seven outstanding personalities who are called Seven Mogers (Magyars)).

⁴ The above-mentioned Seven Tribes were accompanied by the Tárkány, Varsány and Székely tribes. For 'Onogur' see for example: Keleten kél a nap of Götz László, pp. 265-270.

Here I mention the 4 most important moments in this history:

Phase One:

It is documented by historical sources that the first Islamic-Muslim nations-tribes reached the Carpathian Basin with the Conquering Magyar Tribes, they were the Kabar or the Káliz.¹ This group is mentioned in Hungarian historical sources under different designations: chvar, chovar, chaval and chalis.² They originally came from the region of khwārezm. They are described as a tribe speaking Iranian languages and confessing Islam, but generally they are considered to be Ismaelites. This Káliz population later on played an important role in Hungary's administrative and financial life. We have a charter presented to the Abbey of Zobor in 1111 which says: '... Institores autores autem regii fisci, quos hungarice *caliz* vocant...' (... Publicans of the royal treasury, who in Hungarian are called *caliz*...)³

We know that the Pechenegs accepted Islam during the period of 988-997 due to the *da'wah* activity of Muslims from khwārezm. This is recorded by Abū 'Ubayd al-Bakrī (d. 1094) in his *كتاب المسالك والممالك* (*Book of Highways and Kingdoms*). Accordingly, the first Pecheneg immigrants into the Carpathian Basin around 1036 were already Muslims.⁴

In the 10th and 11th centuries a group of Muslims appears in the Carpathian Basin, they are generally considered to be Ismaelites and they are called in Hungarian 'böszörmény'⁵ or by its plural form 'böszörmények'. This designation, in Hungary, refers to Muslims originating from among the Volga Bulgars, the Káliz and the Ismaelites. To date two places have preserved this name: Berekböszörmény, a small town in Hajdú-Bihar county and Hajdúböszörmény,⁶ a town in Hajdú-Bihar county, to the north-east of Debrecen.

¹ This is an international loanword. See e.g. Syriac: *χwalis* or the Byzantine Greek: *χαλιῆστοι* (this is a plural form). The origin of this word is not clearly defined. See TESz (article: káliz).

² See DAI, passim.

³ See TESz (article: káliz).

⁴ In Tolszov, Sz. P.: *Az ősi Chorezm*, Budapest 1948, p. 246.

⁵ In TESz: The origin of this name may come from an old Turkish or Persian form: *bururmen*, *bezermen*, *buzerman*, *buzurman*, all of them referring to Ismaelite Muslims living in Hungary.

⁶ The author of this present article was born in Hajdúböszörmény.

Phase Two:

The Hungarian Ignáz Goldziher in his book *Az Iszlám*¹ says that the smallest group of Muslims in the 12th century AD, who came to Hungary, were the Turks whom he called 'vardarióta törökök' (Turks from the Balkan Peninsula) and Arabs from the Maghrib countries.

These two phases are described by Muslim geographers. There is quite a number of Muslim geographers and travellers who mention Hungary and the Hungarians between the 9th and the 14th centuries. These Arab and Persian travellers use different names and designations when describing the Hungarians. Sometimes they call them 'a kind of Turkish people', or 'Bashghird' or 'Unqur' or 'المجفرية'. We can mention from among these geographers al-Mas'ūdī (c. 893-956) and his *Murūj adh-Dhahab*, al-Istakhri, al-Bakrī, Ibn Hurdadbeh, Ibn Rustah, Gardizi, Ibn Fadhlān and finally Abū Ḥāmid al-Gharnāī. This latter traveller stayed in Hungary between 1150-1153, during the rule of King Géza II. Their works and relevant parts of their books are thoroughly studied and examined by Hungarian Orientalists.²

Phase Three:

In 1355 a new nation appears from the direction of the Balkan Peninsula, during the reign of King Lajos I, they are the Ottomans. Beginning from the year 1389 they attack the territory east of the river Tisza, then from 1421 the region of Transdanubia. Later on they besiege and capture Buda Castle in 1541, marking the beginning of the Ottoman occupation of Hungary. This era was dealt with in the previous pages.

Phase Four:

Finally, in 1908 the Hungarian Parliament declared the annexation of Bosnia and therefore a great number of Bosnian Muslims became subjects of Hungary.

Then as a conclusion of all this, the Hungarian Parliament sanctioned the religion of Islam as an official religion in Hungary and issued the law of 1916, article XVII, in which Islam was declared an official religion.

¹ Pp. 523-524.

² See for example, Kmoskó Mihály: Mohamedán írók a steppe népeiről. Also see other sources in the reference section.

The Birth and Growth of Interest in Hungary in Oriental Issues

The western European countries discovered the Eastern World in general, and especially the Arabio-Islamic World, and began to turn their attention towards the Oriental World and Oriental issues, and the birth of Orientalism urged Hungary, Hungarian scientists and common people alike, to show interest in the Orient.

Indirect Motives:

Western writers and poets, and their works in the 18th century might also influenced the rise of interest in Oriental cultures and languages in Hungary. It is enough to mention for example *Les Lettres Persanes* by Montesquieu¹ or *Mahomet ou le Fanatisme* by Voltaire² or the *West-östlicher Diwan* by Goethe.³

From among the scientific works we can bring forth as examples the epoch-making achievement of Georg Friedrich Grotefend⁴ and that of Jean-François Champollion.⁵

This scientific movement was supported by the wars of Napoleon I in Egypt, and in a sense this military campaign was the basic motivation in calling Orientalist sciences into being.

Direct Motives:

One of the basic motives which launched the thorough and systematic study of Semitic-Oriental languages, especially Arabic, Turkish and Persian, was the quest for the original home of Hungarians. As I emphasized in the previous part, it is hardly possible to determine the origin of the Hungarian tribes. This patriotic feeling made Hungarian scholars travel to the Eastern-Oriental countries and it urged them to study Oriental languages, especially Arabic and pushed them to the study of Islamic sciences.

¹ Charles de Secondat, baron de la Brède et de Montesquieu, French writer and poet (1689-1755).

² François-Marie Arouet, Voltaire (1694-1778), French writer, poet and philosopher.

³ Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749-1832), German poet.

⁴ G. F. Grotefend (1775-1853), German Orientalist, who by decoding the ancient Persian cuneiform inscriptions founded the school of cuneiform epigraphy.

⁵ Jean-François Champollion (1790-1832), French Orientalist, who by the help of the Rashid (Rosetta) Stone discovered the secrets of hieroglyphic writing and founded the school of Egyptology.

From among the first travellers and scholars who searched for the original homeland we can mention the following personalities:

- a) The monk Julianus¹ who travelled, as early as the 13th century, to the river Ethyl in Bashkiria searching for pagan Hungarians, he was commissioned by King Béla IV.
- b) Kőrösi Csoma Sándor² who travelled from Transylvania to Asia and finished his journey in Tibet.

These journeys and scholars and their students and followers along with their scientific legacy opened up the way for the study of Arabic and kindled the interest.

The first scholar, teaching Arabic language, about whom we have official record is:

- a) Repiczky János.³ He taught Turkish and Persian languages, as an honorary lecturer (private-docent) at the University of Pest. But we know that he also taught Arabic language, one of his student was Vámbéry Ármin. This is documented in a

¹ The monk Julianus (or Julian) was a Dominican preaching friar in the 13th century who travelled twice in order to find the original home of Hungarians. His first journey is recorded by monk Ricardus, entitled: "De facto Hungariae Magnae", in Szentpétery Imre (ed.): *Scriptores rerum Hungaricarum* (II, Budapest. 1938). His second journey was in 1237. He informed Europe about the coming of the Tatar army. This Tatar invasion of Hungary culminated in 1241-42 in the battle of Muhi, by the river Sajó, on 11 and 12 April 1241 the Tatar forces defeated the Hungarian King and his army. This invasion is recorded by a contemporary writer, Rogerius, in his Latin book, entitled: *Carmen Miserabile*. It was first published in 1488, then the first Hungarian translation appeared in 1861.

² Kőrösi Csoma Sándor, founder of modern Tibetology (1784-1842 in Darjeeling) who searched for the origins of Hungarians in India and Tibet and travelled via Bokhara, Iran and Afghanistan. Works include: *Grammar of Tibetan Language in English* (1834), *The Life and Teaching of Buddha* (1957). About his life and scientific activity see for example, Baktay Ervin: *Kőrösi Csoma Sándor*, and Kara György: *Kőrösi Csoma Sándor*.

³ Repiczky János (Ujbars 23 April 1817 — Pest, 25 March 1855) librarian, corresponding member of Magyar Tudományos Akadémia (Hungarian Academy of Sciences). He studied theology at the Lutheran secondary school of Pozsony (now Bratislava, in Slovakia), then in 1842 he studied at the University of Tübingen (theology, Hebrew, Persian, Turkish and Arabic). His works: *Keleti órák (Eastern Lessons)*, Szeged (1848), *A Perzsa és szanszkrit nyelvek párhuzama (Parallelism between the Persian and Sanskrit Languages)* in *Akadémiai Értesítő* (1850), *Gyakorlati török nyelvtan (Practical Turkish Grammar)*, Pest (1851). See MÉL.

curriculum, written in Latin language from the year 1852.¹

- b) Vámbéry Ármin.² He is one of the earliest and the most famous of all Hungarian Orientalists. During all his life, he searched for the 'cradle of Hungarians' and he thought and was convinced of the fact that the origin of the Hungarian nation would be found among the Turkish speaking people who confessed Islam. As a consequence of his scientific activity and works, Hungarian scholarly and academic attention and curiosity turned towards Islamic nations, languages and cultures, and naturally towards the study of the Glorious Qur'ān.
- c) Finally, we have to mention the role played by Turkey after the defeat and suppression of the Hungarian War of Independence of 1848-49 by the Habsburgs and the Russian Czarist intervention forces. Hundreds of common people, simple soldiers and officers had to flee from retaliatory sanctions and from the vengeance of the triumphant forces. Turkey sheltered the Hungarian refugees, thus the old enemy, that once occupied the Hungarian Kingdom, now became the home of several outstanding Hungarians and others. This kind and generous act, also helped in turning the attention towards the eastern countries, cultures, languages and naturally towards the religion of Islam. Among the refugees were:

- Bem József,³ who is known to Hungarians as 'Bem Apó' (old

¹ Országos Levéltár (Hungarian National Archives) D-113,VI-(4761)No.10.

² Vámbéry Ármin (Vamberger Hermann) (Dunaszerdahely, 19 March 1832 — Budapest, 15 September 1913), Hungarian Orientalist, traveler, university professor, member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He visited Constantinople during 1857-61. In 1861 he began his scholarly activity related to the search for the original home of Hungarians (in Hungarian: őshaza kutatás). Disguised as a Muslim dervish he visited Erzurum, Tebriz, Khiva, Bokhara, Samarqand, Herat, Mashhad, and Teheran. We owe to him the first scientific geographical and ethnographical description of Central-Asian nations. Some of his works: *Türkisch-deutsches Wörterbuch*, Constantinople (1858), *My journeys and experiences in Persia*, Pest (1864), *Der Islam in XIX. Jahrhundert*, Leipzig (1875), *A magyarok eredete (Origin of Hungarians)* Pest (1882), *The Story of my Struggles*, London (1904).

³ Bem József (Tarnow, Poland, 14 March 1794 — Aleppo, Syria 10 December 1850), Polish officer, Hungarian Honvéd General. He liberated Transylvania from the enemy. The Hungarian Parliament appointed him lieutenant general on 3 March 1849. On 31 July 1849 he was defeated by the Czar's Army at Segesvár. See MÉL. Works about him: Czetz János: *Bem Erdélyi hadjárata 1848-49-ben*, Pest 1868, and Kovács Endre: *Bem József*, Budapest, 1954.

Bem). After the capitulation of Világos¹ he fled and emigrated to Turkey and there he joined the Turkish army. He was the military Commander of Syria until his death. He was known there as Pasha Murad Tawfiq.

- Guyon Richárd,² Honvéd General who joined the Hungarian Revolution in 1848, as the major of the Hungarian National Guard. After the defeat of the Revolution he fled to Turkey, where he joined the Turkish armed forces and was appointed lieutenant general. He played an active role in the Crimean War in 1853-56 and he was the Commander-in-Chief of the Asian troops of the Turkish army. Because of court intrigues he was dismissed from service and then executed.
- Kmetty György,³ Honvéd General, after the defeat of the Revolution fled to Turkey and participated in the Crimean War, he was called Kurshid Pasha.

Phases of Translation

The history of translating the Glorious Qur'an into Hungarian can be divided into three greater periods.

- The first of them is the pre-Orientalist period.
- The second, is the Orientalist period.
- The third, is the attempts of Hungarian Muslims.

The pre-Orientalist period may be described as an epoch of ignorance concerning oriental matters and as a phase of misunderstanding and misinterpreting religious issues. This was a period that completely lacked scholarly attitude and exact knowledge, it was short of mastering Classical Arabic, the so-called اللغة العربية الفصحى. This period also had no idea about related sciences, such as the

¹ Signed on 13 August 1849 by the Hungarian General Artúr Görgey. This was an unconditional surrender to the Russian Czarist Army.

² Guyon Richárd (Bath 31 March 1813 — Constantinople 12 October 1856), Honvéd General, he fought in the battles of Pákozd and Schwechat. During the famous Winter Military Expedition (in Hungarian: Téli Hadjárat), by the victory at Branyiszkö, he opened and secured the way for the Honvéd Army. About him: Márkus László: Guyon Richárd, Budapest, 1955.

³ Kmetty György (Felsőpokrógy 24 May 1813 — London 25 April 1863), Honvéd General. In 1848 major of 23rd Honvéd Battalion of Győr, during the capture of Buda Castle he was commander of an army corps. See MÉL.

science of Prophetic Traditions, the science of Qur'ān Commentary, it also lacked reliable Arabic dictionaries. The representatives of this era were mainly members of the Catholic Church or they were men closely affiliated to it. Their main purpose was to refute and to prove the falsehood of Islamic teachings and the values of the teachings brought by the Glorious Qur'ān. Naturally this so-called 'falsehood' must be understood according to their evaluation.

One sentence is enough to highlight their thinking. Hottinger wrote a book about Islam and said: 'Studying the written documents of other religions strengthens the basic fundamentals of our faith.'¹

The Orientalist period brought some kind of a change in thinking and in dealing with Oriental issues. Orientalism reached its apogee in the 19th century. Better educated and, to some degree, experienced scholars began their scientific and scholarly activity in that period. Their scientific achievement gradually improved. Their books and research journeys discovered the unknown and never visited areas of the Islamic World. They brought the Eastern World closer to Europe and shed light on issues never heard about. They elucidated and explained the basic elements of Islamic Faith, studied and clarified religious sciences in a scholarly way, quite often unbiased and in many cases not without partiality.

Translations from the Pre-Orientalist Period:

The basic characteristic feature of this period, not only in the field related to the translation of the Glorious Qur'ān, but the whole Hungarian society at large, was the overwhelming spread of Latin language. This language was the so-called lingua franca of the administrative affairs and it was the language of sciences. This was true in other European countries too. For this reason it is not surprising that the first Hungarian translation used a Latin version.

It is well-known that the Glorious Qur'ān was translated into Latin as early as the 12th century AD. That particular translation was ordered by the abbot of Cluny, Pierre le Vénérable, in 1143.

From this pre-Orientalist period we have only two Hungarian translations, or at least we may say that we know only of two attempts that survived.

¹ In *Az Arab irodalom története*, p.52

1. Buzitai Szedlmayer Imre¹ and Gedeon György² in 1831, in the town of Kassa.

The title of the translation is: 'Munkája:³ Mohammed, Abdalia fia hamis prófétának islami⁴ hit-vallása, vagy-is az Al-Korán, mely arabs nyelvből, melyen Mohammed által íratott, Marakczius Lajos, XI. Innocentius pápa gyóntatója...által deákra fordíttatott, s az ő észrevételeiből, s mások jegyzeteiből megvilágosított s át-tétezt: Egy előbocsátott kis bevezetéssel, és az egész Mohammed vallásnak magából az Al-Koránból (feljegyeztetve lévén, mindentűt a Súrák, s a Súrák versei) összeszedegtetett rövid foglalatjával,- úgy az islami hitnek az igaz hittől eltévelyedése elő-terjesztésével Reinekczius M. Keresztély által. Magyarosíták s némely jegyzetekkel világosíták Buzitai Szedlmayer Imre és Gedeon György.⁵

Description of the book: It contains 8 introductory pages (I-VIII) and the translation itself is of 516 pages. The book is of 21 cm. One copy of it can be found in the National Széchényi Library (Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, under the number 47.546)

The title in English: (His work: the Islamic creed of Mohammed,⁶ the false prophet, son of Abdalia, i.e. the Al-Korán, that was written by Mohammed and that was translated from Arabic language into Latin language, by Marakczius Lajos, the father-confessor of Pope Innocentius XI. It was supplied by his remarks and by the remarks of others and elucidated by their notes. It was supplied by a short introduction, containing the whole faith-creed of Mohammed religion, gathered from the Al-Korán (along with the names of the Suras and their verses). And it was supplied by an explanation proving

¹ Buzitai Szedlmayer Imre, I could not find biographical data for this person.

² Gedeon György, Hungarian landlord, son of Gedeon Ferencz (magistrate of a Hungarian administrative district) and of Szilávy Mária. Born in 1793, in Nádasd, a village in Abatújmege county, in Magyar írók: 1000-1990.

³ Szimnyi József mentioned it in his book: Magyar írók élete és munkái (*The life of Hungarian writers and their books*).

⁴ This Hungarian form 'islami' has no relation with the original Arabic إسلامي form at all, in spite of the fact that both suffixes are used for the same reason. For the letter 'i' at the end of the word is a Hungarian suffix that creates an adjective from a noun. E.g. Budapest (capital of Hungary) and budapesti (a person from Budapest).

⁵ The language of this short introduction and its literary style is a bit archaic, full of rare verbal forms, and its orthography too differs from the present rules.

⁶ The underlining is by me, as I will be discussing these shortly.

that the Islamic faith had deviated from the True Religion, presented by Reinekczius M. Keresztély. Translated into Hungarian language and annotated by Buzitai Szedlmayer Imre and Gedeon György).

Discussion: This long title reveals the aims and purpose of the authors and it speaks for itself. It is a typical polemic Christian work that aims at the refutation of our Glorious Book.

- 'the Islamic creed of Mohammed': With this phrase they ascribe the creed to Muḥammad (ﷺ) exclusively, and the fundamental elements of our Religion, as if they were invented by him. Let me quote a saying from Shaikh-I-Islām Aḥmad bin Taymiyya, who said: Creed should not be taken from me. Nor from those more knowledgeable than me, but from Almighty Allah and His Prophet (ﷺ). Needless to say that not believing in Muḥammad's (ﷺ) Prophethood was a most basic tenet that held through most of the early European encounters with Islam.
- 'the false prophet': This is typical for the pre-Orientalist period, the Christians of that era rejected the Message of our beloved Prophet (ﷺ). They always called Muslims 'infidels'. This is symptomatic of lack of knowledge, lack of tolerance and lack of respect.
- 'son of Abdalia': Naturally this should be (محمد بن عبد الله), so the correct form is 'son of 'Abdullāh'. But this form is sufficient proof of their lack of knowledge or rather of their ignorance. It shows that neither Marracci, the earlier translator, nor Szedlmayer and Gedeon had much proficiency, nor any kind of expertise in Arabic.
- 'was written by Mohammed': For quite a long time, this was the prevailing and widespread idea, and the accepted standpoint. Even, some Orientalists support this false idea, and they consider the Holy Qur'ān as the work and words of Muḥammad (ﷺ).
- 'Marakczius Lajos': This Marakczius Lajos is abbot Louis Marracci, who translated the Glorious Qur'ān into Latin between 1691 and 1698. Entitled "Prodromus ad refutationem Alcorani".¹ Some say that Marracci translated his work from an earlier Latin translation, others say that he used a Spanish translation.² Szedlmayer and

¹ In English: *Precursor to the refutation of Alcoran*.

² Marracci added to his translation the following sentence in Latin: 'ad cuius profecto mentionem inhorrescere nobis debet animus'. In English: 'Naturally our soul must abhor and feel disgust from its being mentioned'.

Gedeon translated their book from this Latin version. So this Hungarian version is a translation of a translation, neither of them derived from an authentic source.

- 'whole faith-creed of Mohammed religion': Absurd and ignorant statement. The religion belongs to Allah, the Almighty. Innumerable *āyahs* in the Glorious Qur'ān emphasize this basic notion.
- 'proving that the Islamic faith had deviated from the True Religion': This is typical of the era. Nothing but Christianity is considered as the only way of salvation.

2. Szokolay István¹ was the editor of a Qur'ān translation, entitled: 'A török közélet, szokások, s törvények és a Korán, a törökök társadalmi s vallásos törvénykönyvük' (*The Turkish public life, customs and laws and the Koran, the religious and social book of law for the Turks*). This was published in Pest, by Emich in 1856. A copy of this translation can be found in the National Széchenyi Library, under the number 47140. The translation consists of 583 pages.

Translations from the Orientalist Period:

1. Hollósi Somogyi József²

His work is a part of a collection of four books, entitled *Vallások Könyve 2. (The Book of Religions 2.)*. His book is entitled: *A Korán szemelvényekben (Arabból fordította és jegyzetekkel ellátta Hollósi Somogyi József) (The Korán in selected parts. Translated from Arabic language and annotated by Hollósi Somogyi József)*, 1st edition 1943, Budapest, Officina Nyomda és Kiadóvállalat.

Description of the book: It consists of 92 pages and its size is 19x13 cm. It contains the translation of some selected *āyahs* and some shorter *sūrahs*. It is not a complete translation. It has 77 pages, the translation is between pages 15 and 92.

Here I give the titles in Hungarian, with their English translation:

A megnyitó fejezet³ (the opening chapter), A tehén (the cow, pp.

¹ Szokolay István (Vác, 29 September 1822 — Budapest, 2 December 1904), Hungarian lawyer, and author of several legal works, member of the Hungarian National guard during the Revolution of 1848-49. See MÉL.

² I could not find biographical data of this author.

³ The upper and lower cases are the translator's own.

15-25), Az asszonyok (the women, pp. 25-28), A barom (cattle, livestock, pp. 28-30), A legfelső részek (the highest part, probably سورة الأعراف, pp. 31-37!?), József, Hidzsr, Mária, Az aranydís (the golden ornament, *sic.*), A szárazság (dryness, aridity!!), A Könyörületes, (the Merciful), a bekövetkező (the happening, the occurring), a gyülekezet (the congregation?!), A kölcsönös csalás (the mutual cheating), A tilalom (prohibition), Az elkerülhetetlen (the inevitable), Noé (Noah), A beburkolózó (he who is wrapping oneself up), A beburkolózó (he who is wrapping oneself up), (he does not differentiate between المذتر and المزل), Az ember (the man), az üzenet (message), Mogorván tekintett (he looked in a morose way?!), A beburkoló (the enveloping), A kettéhasadás (the splitting into two), A csillagok (the stars), A legmagasabb (The highest), Az elborító (the covering), A hajnalpír (the first blush of dawn), A város (the town), A Nap (the Sun), A korai órák (the early hours), A fügefá (the fig-tree), A megalvadt vér (the clotted blood), A fenség (the Highness, or majesty), A világos bizonyosság (the clear proof), A földrengés (the earthquake), A zihálva rohanók (those who run gasping for breath?!), A nagy csapás (the great strike), A rágalmozó (the calumniating), Az elefánt (the elephant), Kurajs, Az alamizna (the alms?!), A hitetlenek (infidels), Pusztuljon el! (Let him perish), Az egység (the unity?! For سورة التوحيد or الإخلاص), A napkelte (the sun-rise), Az emberek (people).

2. Germanus Gyula¹

The Hungarian Orientalist, who during his visit to India embraced Islam and adopted an Arabic name, so from that time on he was known as حاج عبد الكريم جبرمانوس.

Germanus translated selected parts of the Glorious Qur'an and he

¹ Germanus Gyula (Budapest, 6 October 1884 — Budapest, 7 November 1979). He studied at the University of Budapest between 1902 and 1903, then in Istanbul between 1903 and 1906, then at the University of Vienna between 1906 and 1907. Author of several books on Islam, from among them *Allah Akbar* (in this book we can find the translation of a few *āyahs*, when he describes his pilgrimage) and *Kelet fényei felé (Towards the lights of the East)*. He performed the duty of Pilgrimage. In 1934 and 1935 he visited the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, met the King 'Abdu-l-'Azīz, visited Makka the Venerated and Madina the Lightened. Some works of his: *Az arab nemzeti kérdés (Questions of Arab Nationalism)*, Budapest, 1917, *Az oszmán állam megalakulása (The Formation of the Ottoman State)*, Budapest, 1921, *Modern Movements in Islam*, Calcutta 1932, *Allah Akbar*, Budapest, 1936, *Causes of the Decline of Islamic Peoples*, Lahore, 1953, *Arab Geographers*, London 1954.

published it in his book entitled: Arab költők (A Pogánykortól Napjainkig) (*Arab Poets, from the days of Paganism¹ till our days*).

In this book of his, he translated some *sūrah*s and some independent *āyah*s in the following order:

96:1-5, 74:1-9, 16:20-23, the whole *sūrah* 94, the whole *sūrah* 93, the whole *sūrah* 91, 80:17-42, 56:1-55, 70:8-19, 80:1-16, 2:255, finally the whole Opening *sūrah*, i.e. الفاتحة.

Here I give his translation of the Opening *sūrah* and its English translation:

A könyörületes, megkönyörülő Isten nevében
(*In the name of God the merciful, the clement*)

Dicsőség Istennek világok Urának
(*Glory be to God Lord of universes*)

Az irgalmasnak, megkönyörülőnek,
(*The compassionate, the merciful*)

A végső ítélet napja bírójának.
(*judge of the last day*)

Téged imádunk, és tőled könyörgünk segítséget, erőt,
(*We adore!?! you, and from you do we implore help and power*)

Vezess igaz útra, annak útjára, ki kedves az Úr előtt.
(*Guide us to the true way, to the way of him who is dear and beloved by the Lord*)

Nem azokéra, akiket haragod szörnyű súlya ére,
(*Not to the way of those, whom are beaten by the horrible burden of your wrath*)

Sem a tévelygőkére... Ámen.
(*and not to the way of those who err... Amen*)

Some remarks: könyörületes, megkönyörülő (stands for: الرحمن الرحيم). For some unknown reason Germanus did not capitalize these two

¹ Naturally here, he refers to الجاهلية.

Attributes of Allah. I consider it a linguistic mistake.

Isten (stands for الله). Unfortunately, he translated the word الله into Hungarian by 'isten' i.e. god.

Dicsőség (stands for الحمد), i.e. 'glory to God, lord of universes.' I consider this 'glory to God' a typical Christian expression, and I say that it is not the equivalent of الحمد لله.

Irgalmasnak, megkönyörülőnek (stands for الرحمن الرحيم). Unfortunately, there appears here a rude inconsistency in translating الرحمن الرحيم, for in the first *āyah* he wrote 'könyörületes, megkönyörülő', then here 'irgalmasnak, megkönyörülőnek'.

Téged imádunk (stands for the Arabic نعبد إياك). I think that the word 'szolgálunk' i.e. 'worship' would have been a better choice, than his choosing the verb 'adore'. In Hungarian, the verb 'imád' that I translated as 'to adore' has a special connotation and it is not appropriate and nor is it correct for translating 'to worship'.

Ki kedves az Úr előtt (stands for صراط الذين أنعمت عليهم) 'who is dear and beloved by the Lord'

Szörnyű súlya ére (stands for غير المغضوب عليهم) 'who is beaten by its horrible burden'.

Ámen (stands for آمين). Unfortunately he counts آمين as part of the Opening *sūrah*.

3. Simon Robert¹

His work is a complete translation, in two volumes. It was published for the first time in 1987, Budapest, Hungary, by Helikon Publishing House.

The first volume contains the translation itself. In my opinion, his translation is biased to a degree and tendentious. One can find in it what can be taken to be malicious mistranslations. His translation is more criticizing than objective. It lacks sympathy and spiritual attitude.

Here, I give his translation of the Opening *sūrah* and its English translation

¹ Simon Robert was born in Paris in 1939. He studied at the University of ELTE, Budapest (Arabic language, ancient Persian language, Classical Philology). He travelled to Egypt and Tunis.

- 1) Allah, a könyörületes és irgalmas nevében¹
(*In the name of Allah the merciful and compassionate*)
- 2) Dicsőség Allahnak, a teremtmények Urának
(*Glory (be) to Allah the Lord of the created*)
- 3) A könyörületesnek és az irgalmasnak
(*To the merciful and the compassionate*)²
- 4) Aki az Ítélet Napját uralja.
(*He who possesses the Day of Reckoning*)
- 5) Néked szolgálunk és hozzád fordulunk segítségért.
(*We serve to you (quite strange formula) and we turn to you for help.*)
- 6) Vezess minket az egyenes úton,³
(*Guide us on the straight path*)
- 7) Azoknak az útján, akik iránt kegyesnek mutatkoztál s ne azokén,
akiket a haragvásod sújt, sem a tévelygőkén!
(*On the path of those, towards whom you showed yourself kind, and not on the path of those who are hit by your anger and not on the path of the erring.*)

The second volume is entitled 'A Korán világa' (*The world of the Koran*). This consists of two parts.

- The first part takes up pages 1-417. This is an explanation given to the translation. This is a typical Orientalist work, for it deals with the etymology of words, saying that this word derives from Hebrew,

¹ As a rule, Hungarian adjectives precede the noun, in the above order it might be understood that the name of Allah is merciful and compassionate.

² As far as I know there is no 'ج' in the original Arabic version

³ The Attributes 'könyörületes, irgalmas' and the expression 'egyenes út' should be capitalised out of reverence, for they refer either to Allah or to a proper and unique noun. In Hungarian we capitalise these adjectives and nouns. See for example the Hungarian version of the Torah, Book of Genesis (سفر التكوين) 1:2 where we have '...de Isten Lelke' (...but the Spirit of God), or Gen. 1:4 ...ÚRtól thus!! (Both Ú and R are capital letters) (from the Lord). Or see the Gospel according to Matthew 6:9 'Mi Atyánk...' (Our Father). Every word, every noun and adjective referring to God are written, in Hungarian, with capital letters. This method must have been followed in the case of our beloved and Glorious Book.

that word from ancient Syriac etc. It also deals with the origin of stories narrated in the Glorious Book. Quite often he says that this is taken from the Jewish religious literature, then other stories taken from the Bible. All in all, this is a linguistic study.

- The second part is entitled 'Mohamed és a Korán', i.e. 'Muhammed and the Koran' (pp. 421-512).

The sub-titles tell the truth about the intention of the author. I deem it good and appropriate to mention them, just for the sake of uncovering the way of thinking of a biased Orientalist.

- A mohamedi iszlám¹ történeti háttéréhez (*To the historic background of the Islam ascribed to Mohamed*)
- Két nagyhatalom és a 'harmadik világ' az i.sz. 6. Században (*Two great powers and the 'third world' in the 6th century AD*)
- Mekka mint sivatagi kereskedelmi kapu (*Mecca as a desert trade gate*)
- Centrum-periféria viszony az i.sz. 6. Században (*The relation between centre and periphery in the 6th century AD*)
- Az önálló Jemen végnapjai (*The final days of independent Yemen*)
- Arab ütközőállamok a 6. Században (*Arab buffer states in the 6th century*)
- Mekka mint 'port of trade' kialakulása, a ħums és az ilāf (*Birth of Mecca as 'port of trade' the ħums and ilāf*)
- Kereskedelem és iszlám (*Trade and Islam*)²
- Egy életút állomásai: a mohamedi iszlám kialakulása (*Phases of a life, the formation of Islam ascribed to Mohamed*)
- A mohamedi iszlám nyitottsága (*The openness of the Islam ascribed to Mohamed*)

II. Bevezetés a Korán tanulmányozásába (*Introduction into the study of the Koran*)

- A textus receptus kialakulása (*The formation of textus receptus 'the accepted text'*)
- A próféta írástudatlanságának a kérdése (*The problem of the prophet's illiteracy*)

¹ This Hungarian expression 'mohamedi iszlám' can be translated in several ways, e.g. the Islām ascribed to Mohamed, or the Islām of Mohamed, or the Mohamedan Islām.

² Simon, in most of his books, insists that the religion of Islām arose due to commercial circumstances and he says that trade was the basic motivation in 'creating the Mohamedan Islam'?! See for example his booklet 'A mekkai kereskedelem kialakulása' (*The formation of the Meccan trade.*)

- Miért nem állított össze a próféta 'végleges' Korán-szöveget'? (*Why did the prophet not compile a 'final' text-version of the Koran?*)
- Az Abū Bakr-féle gyűjtemény kérdése. A hagyomány és kritikája (*The problem of Abū Bakr's version. The tradition and its critique*)
- A textus receptus redakciója ʿUṡmān idején (*The compilation of the accepted text in the days of ʿUthmān*)
- Az??¹ ʿUṡmān-féle redakció előtti kódexek problémája (*The problem of the codices of pre-ʿUthmān period*)
- Az ihtiyār korszaka, az olvasatok (*The era of ihtiyār, the readings*)
- A Korán-fogalom és szinonimái (*the Koran notion, concept of the Koran and its synonyms*)
- A basmala formula (*The basmala*)
- A 'rejtélyes betűk' problémája (*The problem of the 'miraculous letters'*)
- A Korán nyelve (*The language of the Koran*)
- A Korán stílusához, rím, refrén, kompozíció (*To the literary style of the Koran, rhyme, refrain, composition*)
- A Korán datálásának problémája (*The problem of dating of the Koran*)
- Néhány szó a Korán fordíthatóságáról és a saját kísérletemről. (*Some words about the possibility of translating the Koran and about my own attempt*)

4. Mihálffy Balázs² published a translation of the Glorious Qur'an, entitled 'The Holy Quran'. This was published in Karachi, by Rehbar in 1994. This translation consists of 826 pages. A copy of this translation can be found in the National Széchenyi Library, under the number of OC 89293.

Translations from the Post-Orientalist Period:

As far as this period is concerned, we can say that there are some attempts made by Hungarian Muslims in order to present the Glorious Book of Allah and the translation of its meanings in Hungarian. These translations are either being prepared or awaiting publication.

¹ This is a mistake. For the sound 'c' is a consonant in Arabic. In Hungarian we have two definite articles: 'a' is used before words beginning with a consonant, and 'az' is used before words beginning with a vowel.

² He was the former leader of the Hungarian Muslim Society.

Conclusion

In my opinion the greatest problem with these translations, and with most works of Western Orientalists in general, is that they do not treat the Glorious Qur'ān as a divine revelation, but quite a considerable number from among them say that it is the work of Muḥammad (ﷺ). This statement, unfortunately, is true for most of the Hungarian translations too.

In the beginning, that is the first translations in the 19th century take every oriental issue for Turkish. They often call the Glorious Qur'ān the legislative book of the Turks, as is the case in Szokolay's edition. This ignorant attitude will be transformed and somehow emended by the beginning of Orientalism when Arabic and Islamic studies became independent fields of science.

As we could see, these translations are quite tendentious, and they are full of religious, sectarian bias and prejudice. Sometimes they are of hostile nature, lacking the least objectivity or the minimum scholarly punctuality or the basic expertise in the field of the Qur'ānic studies, not to speak about the related fields, such as linguistic sciences, the science of Prophetic Traditions, the science of Commentaries, and the science of history.

The only exception may be the translation of Gy. Germanus, who carried out his duty with good will. But his translation is sometimes so poetic and he permits himself so great deviation and digression from the Arabic text, thus his work is rather a paraphrase of his own thoughts about the text.

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