

UNIVERSITY OF SZEGED
HISTORY Ph.D. PROGRAM

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**The Egyptian-Hungarian relations between
the two World Wars**
(Summary of Thesis)

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Introduction

My dissertation focuses on the collection of sources concerning the contacts between Egypt and Hungary during the interwar period. The aim of the thesis is to give a review of the political, diplomatic, economic, commercial, cultural and sport relations between Egypt and Hungary and to reveal the correlations between the two states.

I used the documents of the Foreign Ministry and the Prime Minister's Office which can be found in the Egyptian National Archives, and the sources from Archives of the Abdin Palace (the royal archives), and documents of the Hungarian Foreign Ministry concerning Egypt in the Hungarian National Archive. I studied the most important contemporary Egyptian newspapers including the Al-Ahram Arabic daily newspaper, Al-Musawwir and Rose Al-Yousef weekly magazine Al-Wakae Al-Masriya official journal, the Egyptian Gazette, and Egyptian Mail in English and La Bourse Egyptienne in French.

The Structure of the Dissertation

I discuss the inter-war political, economic and social structures of Egypt its government closely linked to the public administration, in particular the formation of the foreign administration in the first chapter. I am convinced that it may be interesting for Hungarian historians and at the same time it contributes to a deeper understanding of the connection between the two states.

Basically, I used the results of the Egyptian and English American historiography concerning the history of Egypt.

In the second chapter, I studied the Egyptian - Hungarian relations including the political, diplomatic, economic, commercial, cultural, scientific and sport contacts and cooperation on the basis of archival and contemporary articles of the Arabic English and French newspapers of Egypt. I compared the data from Egyptian sources with those of the Hungarian archives and contemporary Hungarian press from the viewpoint of Egypt. Mutual approach can be observed between the two states in the second half of the twenties which is demonstrated by the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1928, however, the relationship of the two countries can not be regarded as too tight from diplomatic point of view. The Hungarian Extraordinary Ambassador and Minister Plenipotentiary defended the interests of the Hungary from Switzerland, and the establishment of the Hungarian embassy took place in 1939 in Cairo, and Mr. Semsey Andor was the Chargé d'Affaires. The Egyptian diplomats accredited to the Hungarian governor resided in Vienna, and later from Switzerland. Nevertheless, several hubs can be detected in the contacts between the two countries.

I present the image of Hungary and Hungarians in the contemporary Egyptian press in the third chapter. It is worth analyzing how the Egyptian editors and journalists and reporters portrayed the era of the Hungarian kingdom without a king for the Egyptian public.

Conclusions

The history of Egypt and Hungary between the two World Wars showed up a number of similarities. After the World War I, a revolution broke out in Egypt too, but Egypt's territorial integrity has never been at risk. The Egyptians rebelled against the British protectorate and colonial dependence. Finally, the British declaration abolished the protectorate in 1922 and the British government held only four points which guaranteed their influence: providing the main transport routes, the defense of Egypt against foreign aggression, the protection of foreign interests and minorities, the maintenance of British occupation of Sudan. The Italian expansion of the 1930s on the western borders of Egypt contributed to sign the Anglo-Egyptian treaty in 1936, a new agreement under which the British Crown recognized the independence and sovereignty of Egypt. Great Britain secured the military protection of Egypt, so they could have military bases and could keep the main traffic routes under control. London sponsored Egyptian application for the membership in the League of Nations. The British government supported the abolition of the Capitulations, the special status of foreign citizens. The 1937 Montreux Convention abolished the Capitulations. Egyptian government could form its domestic and foreign policies including the opening of embassies and consulates in other countries.

The interwar period can be considered as liberal parliamentary democracy, but the political scene was dominated by three power groups: the British, the royal

palace and the Wafd Party having only mass support among the political parties which acquired a majority in all free elections. The palace and the British tried to limit the operation of the parliament for their own special interests, while the Wafd Party was in the absence of a competitive situation without rival parties. Thus, the tradition of liberal democracy could not really gain strength. It was threatened especially by the absence of stable governments that could remain in power for a longer time.

The industrialization progressed well in the field of economy, but the dominant role in politics played the landowners, while the larger companies were founded by foreigners. The national sovereignty overshadowed the issues of Egyptian social tension. Thus, the major social reforms could be out of the question, although the problems of overpopulation, the growing number of urban poor, the miserable situation of the peasantry ought to be solved.

The Egyptian-Hungarian relations were influenced decisively by the political situation of the world and the interests of the two countries. The Hungarian Peace Treaty signed in Trianon has two articles dealing with the relation of Hungary and Egypt. Hungary as a successor state of the Austro-Hungarian Empire lost the rights on the use of the Suez Canal and advantageous Egyptian imports of goods, and recognized Britain's Protectorate over Egypt. After the British declaration of Egypt independence of 1922 the Hungarian government decided to establish Honorary General Consulate in Egypt in 1924. Three years after the

Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936 the Hungarian Embassy was opened in Cairo.

The history of the relationship culminated in the visits of leading politicians and members of royal family. In this respect, Miklós Horthy, Jr., son of the Hungarian governor spent several weeks in Egypt in 1932, 1934, 1938 and 1939. He discussed the opportunities for the development of bilateral economic relations and initiated several joint ventures as well during his visits. From Egyptian point of view, the most important event was the visit of the Egyptian Prime Minister, Ismail Sedky Pasha to Hungary in 1932. The Egyptian prime minister showed special interest in Hungarian trains, agriculture and the horses for the Royal Horse Guards. Besides, the Egyptian Queen, Nazli's visit in the summer of 1938 was of great importance primarily from protocol point of view.

Trade and economic cooperation were important elements of the Egyptian-Hungarian relations between the two countries. The Egyptian cotton, the Hungarian locomotives, trains played a key role in bilateral trade from 1924 to 1939. The Trade Agreement between Egypt and Hungary signed in 1928 opened new vistas in the economic relations between the two countries. The Ganz was active in Egypt from among the Hungarian companies selling pumps, locomotives and trains. To promote the development of bilateral trade relations the Hungarian-Egyptian Trade Company was established in 1933 while HUNEGYPT travel agency was founded in 1935 to develop the tourism between the two countries.

The Egyptian-Hungarian cultural and scientific relations between the two World Wars were not so intensive as before the World War I and the last third of

the 20th century. Nonetheless, several scientific visits were recorded in the contemporary Egyptian press. In addition, the programs of the Hungarian radio regularly appeared in the French and English daily newspapers between 1st April 1932 and 30th April 1937. László Almásy had a special place in the history of the Hungarian Egyptian relations. He was a pioneer in exploring the deserts west of Nile valley, then he served as an expert of the desert in Rommel's army fighting against the British, and finally he was one of the founders of the Egyptian aviation. It is also worth mentioning that the Egyptian Museum in Cairo was established by two Hungarian experts. Alajos Paikert and Edgar Iván Nagy were the first directors of the museum between 1930 and 1936. The pictures of both directors can be seen on the wall of the directors' room in Cairo Agricultural Museum.

As for the sport, football played a prominent role. Hungarian Clubs toured regularly in Egypt: Ferencváros (1928), MTK (1929), and Újpest (1939).

The articles concerning Hungary and Hungarians published in the Egyptian newspapers and news reports in Arabic, English and French between the two World Wars indicate that the Egyptian public was well-informed about Hungary in certain periods.

Immediately after the end of the World War I, the Egyptian editors and reporters closely monitored the events in Hungary and they presented the changes of the government almost up-to-date between 1918 and 1920. In addition, they emphasized the barbarity of the Soviet Government. The communist seizure of power was presented in negative context. This might correlate with

the fact that some part of the Egyptian press was under British influence, and the Egyptian journalists did not sympathise the soviet system and ideology. It is remarkable that the Hungarian and other communists were unequivocally condemned.

The Egyptian audience was informed in detail about the military operations of French General Franchet d'Esperey force, the military attack of the Czech Republic and the Yugoslav army against Hungary. A special attention should be paid to military maneuvers of the Rumanian army that occupied Budapest - according to news reports - they murdered the inhabitants and robbed the aid shipments. It seems that the Egyptian press sympathized with the Hungarians, and the attack against them described in negative context.

The Egyptian press portrayed Miklós Horthy as a positive figure, and felt sympathy with the restoration of the monarchy in Hungary. The signing of the peace treaty was considered to be necessary as the Egyptians were influenced by the British and after the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire Hungary was not an influential factor in that region. It is reflected in the relevant articles of the Treaty of Trianon concerning Egypt.

The Egyptian press focused on the attempts of Charles IV., to regain his Hungarian throne. They were indicated as positive events which can be connected with the fact that the Egyptian public was committed to the monarchy.

The Hungarian prime minister, Gyula Gömbös's orientation to Rome and Berlin in 1930 was highlighted. Duel between the Tibor Eckhardt and Gyula Gömbös reflected as an act of European gallantly which resolves

disputes. The news of the duel evoked sympathy in archaic groups of Egyptian society suggesting that the principle of tit for tat law prevailed in Hungary.

In 1936 the Italian visit of the Prime Minister, Gyula Gömbös and Foreign Minister, Kálmán Kánya and the Italian-Hungarian-Austrian Treaty were of primary interest of London, as the treaty was against Germany's claim to annex Austria (Anschluss), and laid the foundation for the establishment of a customs union among the three states, which prevented the German economic penetration into Central Europe.

Accordingly, it can be concluded that the Egyptian press positively portrays the Hungarian consolidation in the 1920s. The Hungarian leaders were regarded as chivalrous men, who even dueled for the truth, the people as supporters of monarchy and they rejected foreign influence and injustice.

Papers related to the topic of the Ph.D. thesis

Supplementary to the History of Egyptian-Hungarian Relations: *Chronica* 9-10 Szeged (2009-2010), 168-176.

The Egyptian-Hungarian Diplomatic Relations between World War I and II.: *Mediterrán Tanulmányok – Études sur la region Méditerranéenne* Szeged 2011, 51-59.

Az egyiptomi-magyar diplomáciai kapcsolatok a két Világháború közötti időszakban: *Mediterrán Világ* Veszprém 2011, 5-14.

العلاقات الدبلوماسية المصرية – المجرية إبان فترة ما بين الحرب العالمية الأولى والثانية (Egyiptomi-magyar diplomáciai kapcsolatok a két világháború között): *Magallat Kullijet al-Adab* 19 Beni Szuef 2011, 329-349.

العلاقات الرياضية المصرية – المجرية إبان فترة ما بين الحرب العالمية الأولى والثانية (Egyiptomi-magyar sport kapcsolatok a két világháború között): *Magallat Kullijet al-Adab* 22 Beni Szuef 2012, 431-457.

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