

## “I Have To Disguise Myself”: Orientalism, Gyula Germanus, and Pilgrimage as Cultural Capital, 1935–1965

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The Muslim pilgrimage has long constituted a form of cultural capital. Throughout the dangerous journey to Arabia, and then within Mecca and Medina, scholars and non-scholars have mingled and exchanged ideas, bought books, and have been enriched by new experiences.<sup>1</sup> Back home, the male and female pilgrim have acquired a title, “the one who made the pilgrimage” (*ḥājj* [*ḥājjī*] and *ḥājjja*), which has informed his or her status in the community. Making a pilgrimage, in general, activates claims to piety, knowledge, and prestige—a phenomenon that continued in the twentieth century. Such claims and their limits are the subject of this chapter, which examines the doubly curious example of a Muslim Orientalist from Eastern Europe in the interwar and Cold War periods.

Gyula or Julius Germanus (1884–1979), a Hungarian Turkologist and Arabist, and a convert to Islam, acquired and claimed knowledge by making the Hajj to Mecca and also trips in the Ḥijāz. Yet his first two travels occurred in the late 1930s when technology had already transformed the nature of the pilgrimage. Inside Arabia, this was a period of slower transition because the young Saudi kingdom was relatively poor, although as we shall see, modern technology such as radio was available, and thus Nazi radio propaganda in Arabic was discussed. Germanus nonetheless attempted to experience and narrate the pilgrimage as a romantic enterprise and struggle for knowledge. The product was a series of books in which a mixture of scholarship, travel description, and popular convictions created a somewhat literary representation of the Middle East during the Cold War. What his story best exemplifies, however, is the political function of the Hajj within Eastern European-Middle Eastern entanglements.

1 F.E. Peters, *Mecca: A Literary History of the Muslim Holy Land* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994). The author would like to express his gratitude for permission to publish the photographs to Dr. János Kubassek, director of the Hungarian Museum of Geography, and for research help to Dr. Katalin Puskás, chief archivist in the same institution.

By the twentieth century, the figure of the Orientalist as a scholar-traveler became an outdated public image. Germanus was one of the last nineteenth-century-type Orientalist scholars who personally attempted the Hajj. Between 1800 and 1950, around a hundred European adventurers, spies, traders, tourists, and scholars in Arabia tried,<sup>2</sup> but only a few succeeded, or even reached Mecca, usually disguised. John Lewis Burckhardt, Richard Burton, Snouck Hurgronje, and St. John Philby are the best known names.<sup>3</sup> For them, the Hajj was an opportunity to gain information about geography, politics, commerce, and the institutions and rituals of Islam. Germanus included himself in this chain of travelers and scholars in his writings,<sup>4</sup> which painted a relatively static image of “the Orient” for Hungarian readers in the 1960s. This image did not reflect much of the changing reality of Egypt and Arabia in the late 1930s, and by the 1960s, after the discovery of oil he presented it as a lost, nostalgic one to his Socialist Hungarian audience. Germanus is exceptional in his enterprise, however, not only because of his attempt to experience the last remnants of a changing past, but also because he was a convert to Islam. His conversion was advertised and accepted in the Muslim world and, as we shall see, the story of his Hajj had a following in Egypt in the late 1930s.

This example also provides an introduction into the twentieth-century entanglements of Eastern Europe and the Middle East, which have recently gained some attention in scholarship.<sup>5</sup> The career of Germanus, an example of such an entanglement, starts in the shared twilight of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire. Born into an assimilated Hungarian Jewish family in 1884, he converted to Protestantism in 1909, after studying history, Turkish, and Arabic in Budapest from 1902 to 1907, spending some time in Istanbul, and one postdoctoral year in England. He entered state service as a

2 Benjamin Reilly, “Arabian Travellers, 1800–1950: An Analytical Bibliography,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 1.43 (2016). Reilly, counting couples as one traveler, provides the number 91 in his period, but he does not mention Germanus.

3 F.E. Peters, *The Hajj: The Muslim Pilgrimage to Mecca and the Holy Places* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), Chapter Five.

4 He refers to his “honorable predecessors” (“dicső elődök”), ranging from de Couillon to Burckhardt to Hurgronje. Germanus Gyula, *Allah Akbar!* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1984; original edition 1936), 95–114.

5 The interest of recent scholarship is still limited to Balkans–Middle East comparisons. See Karl Kaser, *The Balkans and the Near East: Introduction to a Shared History* (Vienna: Lit Verlag, 2011); Vangelis Kechriotis, “Requiem for the Empire: ‘Elective Affinities’ Between the Balkan States and the Ottoman Empire in the Long 19th Century,” in Sabine Rutar (ed.), *Beyond the Balkans: Towards an Inclusive History of Southeastern Europe* (Wien, Zürich, Berlin: Lit, 2014), 97–122.

teacher of Turkish in 1912 at the Academy of Oriental Trade in Budapest. During WWI, he served on small-scale, semi-diplomatic missions. In the post-imperial Hungarian period he strove to remain in national academia while serving as the secretary of the Hungarian branch of the PEN Club (Poets, Essayists, and Novelists). Between 1928 and 1931, he taught Islamic Studies at the University of Shantiniketan in India. Germanus converted to Islam in 1930 in Delhi and took the surname 'Abd al-Karīm (Abdul Karim). After WWII, in his late age, he became a prominent Orientalist in Socialist Hungary in the 1960s. I have written in detail about the first half of his career elsewhere.<sup>6</sup>

Germanus's travels demonstrate the continued political significance of the pilgrimage and, to some extent, its educational features in the age of mass travel for Orientalist scholars. He instrumentalized the Hajj for several goals: to improve his Arabic, to build a personal network in Egypt, and to boost his political and scholarly profile in Hungary. I argue that through his pilgrimage, whether intentionally or not, Germanus effectively became a bridge between Soviet Eastern Europe and the increasingly Socialist Middle East (especially Egypt and Iraq) in the 1950s and 1960s. However, his conversion and travel were not enough to achieve scholarly recognition in a field dominated by linguists. Personal testimony became an asset in academia only if it was accompanied by philologically sound work. Neither did Germanus establish himself as an anthropologist that would have rather fitted his interest and character.

This chapter focuses on his three travels to the Ḥijāz: the Hajj in 1935, a curious trip in 1940, and an invitation by the Saudi government in 1965. In terms of networking, Germanus' first travel established friendly connections with Egyptian and Saudi individuals; his second visit helped him to further deepen these friendships; while the third trip, officially organized, seems to have functioned as a form of cultural diplomacy. Germanus' first two visits were both preceded by long periods of learning and preparation in Egypt, during which he acquired a good knowledge of learned Arabic (*fuṣḥā*) and a unique familiarity with modern Arabic literature and its producers in Egypt. In his descriptions of the last two visits, published during the 1950s and 1960s, respectively, there is a textual interplay between memory, scholarship, popular Orientalism, and Cold War politics. This chapter draws on the critical analysis of these and other works, as well as on hitherto unpublished archival material.

6 Adam Mestyan, "Materials for a History of Hungarian Academic Orientalism—The Case of Gyula Germanus," *Die Welt des Islams* 54.1 (2014): 4–33.

## Pilgrimage and Learning

As a professor of Islam in India between 1928 and 1931, Germanus felt the embarrassing absence of experience in Arabic-speaking lands. He felt his Arabic needed improvement, even though (or perhaps because) he had already started to translate the Qurʾān into Hungarian at that time. In fact, in the 1920s the Caliphate and the translatability of the Qurʾān were two major questions for Muslims all over the world, especially in colonial India,<sup>7</sup> and Germanus may well have been influenced by such debates. He thus sought to enhance both his knowledge and his legitimacy within the field of Islamic studies. It is possible that the plan to make the Hajj preceded his conversion to Islam in Delhi in 1930. Only a few months after his conversion, Germanus, still in India, asked the Hungarian Ministry of Education to finance his Hajj to Mecca, writing: “I have to disguise myself, too, to venture my dangerous trip *pretending* to be Muslim”.<sup>8</sup>

The wording was possibly a device to convince the authorities in interwar Hungary of the scientific spirit behind his conversion. Regardless, no financial assistance was forthcoming in the context of the world economic crisis. Yet a few years later Germanus managed to secure the support of the Hungarian authorities. After he returned, his workplace in Budapest, the Faculty of Economics at the Royal Pázmány Péter University, permitted him to take an official holiday for “a scientific expedition” in 1933. He applied to his faculty and the Ministry of Education with a plan to “finish the Qurʾān-translation according to the various rites” in Egypt, make the pilgrimage, study manuscripts in Medina, and research the “still intact” system of Bedouin tribes in Najd.<sup>9</sup> Dean Count Pál Teleki warmly supported his request; and Germanus received a travel grant from the Ministry.<sup>10</sup>

7 Reza Pankhurst, *The Inevitable Caliphate? A History of the Struggle for Global Islamic Union, 1924 to the Present* (London: C. Hurst and Co., 2013), 37.

8 Letter dated 2 August 1931, from Germanus to Ministry of Education, in Germanus Gyula személyi dossziéja, in 490 d, K636, Magyar Országos Levéltár (Hungarian National Archives; hereafter, MOL) (emphasis added).

9 Undated Letter, Germanus to the Faculty, in 6/b 35, A budapesti királyi magyar Tudományegyetem Közgazdaságtudományi Kar Dékáni Hivatala iratai (hereafter, KKDH), Budapesti Corvinus Egyetem Levéltára (hereafter, BCEL) (Documents of the Dean's Office at the Economics Faculty at the Hungarian Royal University of Sciences in Budapest in the Archive of the Corvinus University in Budapest).

10 The decision of the Faculty is dated 30 November 1933, in 6/b 35, KKDH, BCEL. The decision of the Minister, including the 1000 pengő, is dated 16 February 1934, in Germanus Gyula személyi dossziéja, in 490 d, K636, MOL.

Germanus' Muslim friends in India also supported him by sending articles about his conversion to the journal of Mecca. He was in contact with the Indian poet and Muslim philosopher Muḥammad Iqbal.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps through Iqbal, or through his contacts in the PEN Club, Germanus also approached some Egyptians. For instance, 'Alī Ibrāhīm Pasha, said to be the rector of al-Azhar at that time (was he perhaps the famous Dr. 'Alī Pasha Ibrāhīm, Minister of Health?), 'invited' Germanus to Egypt (in another letter, however, it seems that 'Alī Ibrāhīm only supported Germanus).<sup>12</sup> In his letters to his Muslim friends, Germanus likely refrained from referring to the pilgrimage as a "scientific expedition," and certainly there was no mention of disguising himself. He also contacted a surprising number of Egyptian writers—in particular, the lawyer-writer-historian (Muḥammad) 'Abd Allāh 'Inān (1898–1986), who eventually became a close friend.

In his Hungarian book *Allah Akbar!* (1936) Germanus narrates the story of his conversion, travel to Egypt, and Hajj. In this peculiar description, based on his travel diary,<sup>13</sup> Germanus made conscious references to previous famous European travelers in Arabia such as Burckhardt and Hurgronje.<sup>14</sup> He depicted "the Oriental man" and the noble but uncultured Bedouin, and expressed a huge admiration towards King 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Sa'ūd, whom he actually met in person.<sup>15</sup> To his merit, some of his naïve reflections are interesting today (such as "the *wahhābī* Najd entering Mecca meant the victory of nationalism over cosmopolitan Islam").<sup>16</sup> He provides a fascinating account of the Saudi kingdom before the age of oil. Overall, however, the book must be read with some caution.

In his narrative, Germanus left Budapest sometime in June 1934 to apply for a visa at the Egyptian Embassy in Vienna. His application was refused thanks

11 Letter dated 24 May 1934, from Iqbal to Germanus, in English, in Box 36, Heritage of Gyula Germanus (personal papers of Germanus) in Magyar Földrajzi Múzeum, Érd (Hungarian Geographical Museum, Érd; hereafter, MFM).

12 The letter of 'Alī Ibrāhīm Pasha, dated 7 March 1934, is referred to in a letter dated 16 March 1934, from the Dean to the Pál Förster, chargé d'affaires, in 6/b 35, KKDH, BCEL. It remains unclear how Germanus could approach this pasha. Undated letter, Germanus to the Faculty, in 6/b 35, KKDH, BCEL.

13 The original diary is in Box 36, MFM. It would be an interesting literary exercise to compare the diary with the published book.

14 Germanus, *Allah Akbar!*, 95–114. He had mentioned these travelers already in his applications for Hungarian state support, before the Hajj.

15 Germanus, *Allah Akbar!*, 499–507.

16 Germanus, *Allah Akbar!*, 502.

to the malicious intrigues of a Muslim imam in Budapest who did not want to accept his conversion.<sup>17</sup> At the travel agency in Vienna he met an English lady, a former love, who immediately upon hearing his troubles took him to England, where he briefly met Lawrence of Arabia—a meeting Germanus capitalized upon as a legitimizing device. Upon getting the visa in London, he sailed to Alexandria via Venice.<sup>18</sup> He established himself in Cairo and began to make friends and tried to improve his Arabic from October 1934 onward.

As a Muslim scholar Germanus reached out to Muslim educational institutions in Egypt. He wanted to study at al-Azhar, perhaps imitating his former teacher, the legendary Ignác Goldziher, who attended classes at Al-Azhar—but without conversion—in the early 1870s. Germanus also gave a talk in Arabic about Muslims in Hungary to *Jam'iyat al-Shubbān al-Muslimīn* (The Society of Young Muslims) in December 1934.<sup>19</sup> Next, he met Sheikh Muḥammad al-Zawāhirī (1878–1944), the Grand Sheikh of al-Azhar, informing him about his wish to study at al-Azhar in order to continue his translation of the Qurʾān into Hungarian. When al-Zawāhirī showed reluctance, Germanus produced an emotional cry that he only wanted to learn; as he described it, “my voice was trembling with honesty” and so, finally, he was admitted.<sup>20</sup> But like Goldziher, Germanus could not study at al-Azhar for a longer period. He had to set off once the prescribed time of the Hajj season approached. Interestingly, the events can be read in a new light if we note that Sheikh al-Zawāhirī seriously opposed the translation of the Qurʾān.<sup>21</sup>

In March 1935, Germanus stayed at the famous house of Muḥammad Naṣīf in Jeddah but was arrested. Already in Cairo there was rumor that he was a spy.<sup>22</sup> These suspicions were perhaps based on his public use of English instead of Arabic, or because of the malicious intrigues of the imam from Budapest against him. In Jeddah, he was soon released thanks to the recommendation letters to the famous British agent and traveler Jack “Abdullah” St. John Philby (1885–1960), then a trusted advisor of King Ibn Saʿūd<sup>23</sup> and who was likely one

17 Mestyan, “Materials for a History,” 25–26.

18 Germanus, *Allah Akbar!*, 75–84.

19 Published as Duktūr ‘Abd al-Karīm Jirmānūs, ustādh al-ta’rīkh bi-jāmi‘at Būdāpast, “Al-Islām fī bilād al-Majar,” 19 December 1934, *al-Siyāsa*, press cut, in Box 35, MFM.

20 Germanus, *Allah Akbar!*, 134.

21 *Al-Siyāsa wa-l-Azhar: min Mudhakkirāt Shaykh al-Islām al-Zawāhirī* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2011; orig. 1945), 312–317.

22 Germanus, *Allah Akbar!*, 176.

23 Germanus, *Allah Akbar!*, 301 and 307.

of Germanus's role models.<sup>24</sup> Henceforth, the Hungarian pilgrim continued his travel to Mecca in a state-owned car used for the transportation of pilgrims. This was a relatively new development in the slowly motorized kingdom.<sup>25</sup> In Mecca he observed the neglected condition of the city and its monuments. He embarked upon the rituals of *umra*—by firstly making seven circumambulations around the Ka'ba, and then running seven times between al-Şafa and al-Marwa. At the Ka'ba "the ecstasy of the mob grasped" him in a "spiritual narcosis," so he was not able to "record the scene as a researcher."<sup>26</sup> Later he performed all the necessary stages for the Hajj at Mina, the mountain of 'Arafāt, and Muzdalifa; at the end, he slaughtered a black goat for the ritual sacrifice.

It was also in Mecca that Germanus met King Ibn Sa'ūd in person. In that year, the king had just survived an assassination attempt and Germanus joined a group of pilgrims who went to congratulate him. He asked God to bless the king and introduced himself as an Azharī sheikh, but soon had to reveal that he was a Hungarian scholar. Apparently Ibn Sa'ūd liked him and later invited him to his company. Next, aided by his servant Maḥmūd, Germanus travelled with a caravan to Medina, but became ill along the way. In Medina, he was hosted by a certain Yaḥyā, a friend of Maḥmūd. After visiting the tomb of the Prophet, Germanus's health seriously deteriorated at Yaḥyā's house, though the family did everything in their power to cure him. Finally, he decided to return to Egypt.<sup>27</sup>

In his post-pilgrimage texts Germanus wanted to publicise his spiritual experience in Mecca. Back in Cairo around the middle of April 1935, he published an article (in Arabic, translated from the English) in the Egyptian journal *al-Balāgh*, describing the benefits of the Hajj to the Egyptians.<sup>28</sup> The article was intended to be a proof of faith and a means of strengthening his belonging to the Muslim community. Germanus left Egypt, arriving in Greece via Mandate Palestine and Mandate Syria. In his book *Allah Akbar!*, Germanus admitted that "Athens was the reward for all my sufferings." The description of his Hajj ended here, when he shifted to imagine Beethoven writing a tenth symphony about "the ideal beauty of ancient Greece in its ennoblement by the ethical good. The

24 Philby, too, had converted to Islam in exactly 1930; for his travels see H. St. J.B. Philby, *Sheba's Daughters: Being a Record of Travel in Southern Arabia* (London: Methuen & Co., 1939).

25 David Holden and Richard Johns, *The House of Saud: The Rise and Rule of the Most Powerful Dynasty in the Arab World* (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1981), 102–105.

26 Germanus, *Allah Akbar!*, 352–356.

27 Germanus, *Allah Akbar!*, 352–356.

28 "Khawāṭir 'an al-ḥajj li-l-dukṭūr 'Abd al-Karīm Jirmānūs," *al-Balāgh*, 15 May 1935, press cut, in Box 35, MFM.

goal of human life is righteousness and beauty.” And these are the last sentences in *Allah Akbar!*.<sup>29</sup>

As a result of his Hajj journey, Germanus not only established friendly connections in Egypt and Saudi Arabia and improved his knowledge of Arabic, but also became widely known as an Arabist in Hungary. This was entirely due to the success of his publication of *Allah Akbar!*. Germanus was named “the pilgrim of scholarship” and staged as such (image 8.1), and was invited to give lectures on the radio and even in England. The book was also translated into Italian and German. He was celebrated as the successor of Vámbéry, Goldziher, and Hurgronje, despite the fact that these scholars were of very different caliber.<sup>30</sup> The book provided an appealing blend of scholarly knowledge and the lure of exploration. In this regard, Germanus stood as a potential hero for the Hungarian public caught up in the interwar rush for undiscovered territories.

Orientalism not only functioned as academic knowledge, or popular imagination, but also as a social tradition, almost a celebrity-type of framing. With the publication of *Allah Akbar!* Germanus gained a level of acclaim and recognition rarely achieved by academics. His name was known even in small countryside villages because he was invited to give lectures on radio, the most important media in the interwar period. In 1936, he lectured both in Hungarian and in English on the radio. One of his English radio lectures was even heard in Cairo by the writer Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal (1888–1956), who described it in his book about Arabia, *Fī Manzil al-Waḥy* (1937) as an important element spurring his own Hajj.<sup>31</sup>

In this way, Germanus indirectly inspired and joined a generation of revivalist Muslims for whom the Hajj became an important religious experience again after the reading of Haykal’s description (published in 1937, with huge success). A certain Ibrāhīm Muḥammad Ḥabīb testified that he was partly inspired by Haykal’s text that motivated him to go on Hajj in 1938.<sup>32</sup> The Hajj narratives

29 These sentences are repeated verbatim in a later work, *A félhold fakó fényében*, published first in 1957. I used a new edition: Germanus Gyula, “A félhold fakó fényében,” in Germanus Gyula, *Kelet varázsa* (Budapest: Magvető Könyvkiadó, 1979), 11–210, at 160.

30 See the Hungarian reviews in Mestyan, “Materials for a History,” 30, n. 175.

31 Germanus later recollected that his radio lectures were in Arabic (Germanus, “A félhold fakó fényében,” 161), but from the description of Haykal it is clear that what he heard was in English. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, *Fī Manzil al-Waḥy* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1967), 41–42.

32 Ibrāhīm Muḥammad Ḥabīb, *Riḥla fī al-Arḍ al-Muqaddasa (Bayn Miṣr wa-l-Ḥijāz)*, 1938 (Beirut: al-Dār al-‘Arabiyya li-l-Mawsū‘āt, 2014), 33, 36.



FIGURE 8.1  
*“The Pilgrim of Scholarship”:*  
*an official photo of Gyula*  
*Germanus (1939)*  
 1629-91, HUNGARIAN  
 MUSEUM OF GEOGRAPHY,  
 PUBLISHED WITH  
 PERMISSION

of Haykal and other Muslims were actually different from that of Germanus. While they noted the infrastructural shortcomings in Arabia, their central concern was the regaining of spiritual and moral purity according to Islam. Indeed, it is interesting to read Germanus’s Hungarian description of Hajj in 1935 and Ibrāhīm Muḥammad Ḥabīb’s Arabic diary of 1938 together with an eye on their different social settings, perceptions of Mecca, and the place of the ego in both descriptions.<sup>33</sup>

Meanwhile, politics became toxic in Europe. In Budapest, an anti-Jewish law was promulgated in 1938, a second one in 1939, and a third in 1941. The man who signed most of these laws was Count Pál Teleki—Germanus’ former boss at the Faculty of Economics. Teleki returned to grand politics in 1938 as Minister

33 It is especially different that the pilgrimage was more of a family enterprise for Egyptian Muslims. Ḥabīb, *Rihla*, 41.

of Education and soon became Prime Minister.<sup>34</sup> Germanus had to deny not only his Jewish origins—like many other assimilated Hungarians—but also his Muslim conversion by convincing both the public and Teleki of his Christian faith.<sup>35</sup>

### Fighting Hitler in Arabia

It was in this atmosphere that Germanus wanted to repeat his trip to the Ḥijāz. From the information available it is possible to discern that he considered the first pilgrimage as a failed scientific expedition. He did not complete his original plan to research the “still intact” system of Bedouin tribes in Najd. He later recalled that “it is my duty to go back to accomplish this work.”<sup>36</sup> Teleki, now Minister, helped his former subordinate when Germanus applied for a new sabbatical to “do research in the libraries of Mecca and to visit the cities in the Najd plateau” in May 1938 (when the first anti-Jewish law was debated in the Parliament). In order to accomplish the trip, Germanus also asked for a fund of 150 British pounds and recommendation letters.<sup>37</sup> Teleki permitted the sabbatical and gave financial support. A handwritten note on Germanus’s application that “the sabbatical should be from 1 June 1939 to 31 August 1940” was, in all likelihood, written by Teleki himself.<sup>38</sup> In May 1939, Teleki became Prime Minister (and negotiated with Hitler on behalf of Hungary).<sup>39</sup> This change meant that Germanus had a supporter in the second highest position in the Hungarian administration (the highest being Regent István Horthy); just having this relationship may have protected Germanus from the anti-Jewish laws until 1941.

The political atmosphere of Europe on the brink of the Second World War is reflected in urban legends about Germanus’ second travel. In an anecdote recounted by the late SOAS professor Géza Fehérvári, Prime Minister Teleki

34 Balazs Ablonczy, *Pal Teleki (1879–1941): The Life of a Controversial Hungarian Politician* (Boulder: East European Monographs, Budapest: Institute of Habsburg History, 2006), 165–166.

35 Mestyan, “Materials for a History,” 30.

36 Germanus, “A félhold fakó fényében,” 161.

37 Letter, May 1, 1938, from Germanus to Minister, in 736 d, K636, MOL.

38 Note dated August 12, 1938 from Minister to Dean, in 736 d, K636, MOL. The final note to the Faculty from the Ministry about Germanus’ sabbatical is dated February 27, 1939, in 6/b 35, KKDH, BCEL.

39 Ablonczy, *Pal Teleki*, 174, 206–207.

asked Germanus to act as his go-between by delivering a secret message to the British Government. When Germanus arrived in Alexandria in the autumn of 1939 (see below), he was flown from there by British airplane to London, where he passed an envelope over to an officer in the British Foreign Ministry. In the 1950s, Fehérvári, then a young student, asked Germanus about the content of the message, who summarized it in two points: 1) Hungary would never let the German army use its territory against Poland, and 2) Hungarians would take up arms to resist the Germans if necessary.<sup>40</sup> It is important to note, however, that this story cannot be verified<sup>41</sup> as Germanus never included it in any of his published or unpublished works we have seen so far. Balázs Ablonczy, the leading expert on the life and politics of Count Teleki, does not exclude the possibility of such a mission because the content of the message reflects Teleki's anti-German conviction (which probably led to his suicide in 1941). It would also fit in with his character that favoured informal communication instead of establishing contacts through the pro-German Hungarian state administration. Nonetheless, Ablonczy considers the story in this form unlikely.<sup>42</sup> A curious detail is that Germanus, in fact, visited England, possibly to give a talk in the late summer of 1939 *before* leaving for Arabia (just as he had done prior to his first travel in 1934). On his way back from London he could not fly to Budapest because France closed its air space, so he had to take a train from Paris via Italy.<sup>43</sup> This event occurred around the time of the invasion of Poland (September 1, 1939). If Germanus had ever carried any secret message to the British, it should have been delivered during this trip. The anecdote, as was told to and by Fehérvári, possibly merged two chronologically close, but distinct events, which is a common aspect of Germanus's narrative style.

Contrary to the supposed arrangements in Alexandria, Germanus wanted to *avoid* British-controlled Egypt during his second trip. He travelled from Budapest on a ship as a member of the crew on September 23, 1939 with the intention of reaching Saudi Arabia via Mandate Lebanon, Transjordan, and Iraq.<sup>44</sup> The reason for his disguise as a sailor is not clear. Fehérvári believed

40 Dr. Fehérvári Géza, "Germanus Gyula—A tanár, mint nagypapa," in Edit Lendvai Timár (ed.), *Germanus Gyula—A tudós és az ember* (Érd: Magyar Földrajzi Múzeum, 2009), 56–63.

41 I have found no evidence thus far in either the MOL or in the National Archives of Britain.

42 Email of Balázs Ablonczy to me, 26 August 2011.

43 Germanus, "A félhold fakó fényében," 162. He visited Oxford every year after 1936 until WWII. "Emlékezéseim a PEN-Clubra," 8, MFM.

44 Letter dated 26 June 1939, from Foreign Ministry to Hungarian Royal Legation in Cairo, in 7. tétel, 15. csomó, K90, MOL.



FIGURE 8.2

*Gyula Germanus dressed as a sailor on the ship "Duna" (1939)*

1674–91, HUNGARIAN MUSEUM OF GEOGRAPHY, PUBLISHED WITH PERMISSION

that travelling undercover was connected to Germanus' secret mission. In Germanus's own words, "I had no other chance, only to join the Hungarian navy" in order to reach Arabia. However, Hungary was officially neutral at that time. His preparations in June–July 1939 prove that he chose to travel as a sailor *prior* to the outbreak of the war.<sup>45</sup> A photograph shows Germanus happily posing in his sailor suit during the summer (image 8.2). It seems that the boat trip, then, was part of an effort to actually avoid British-dominated Egypt.

The narrative related to this trip was only much later published, in 1957, after the failed Hungarian revolution of 1956. In this book, entitled *A félhold fakó fényében* (*In the Light of the Dull Crescent*), Germanus described his heroic

45 His "Ideiglenes tengerészeti szolgálati engedély" (Temporary permit for service at sea) is dated 31 July 1939, in Box 36, MFM.

struggle with the sea, his illness, the French-Arab custom officer in Beirut who refused to let him leave the boat (on suspicion that Germanus was a spy), and his unexpected stay in wartime Cairo. Finally, the travel in the Najd constituted an enjoyable sequence of adventures, spiced with Orientalising tropes. *In the Light of the Dull Crescent*, unlike *Allah Akbar!* which was published in 1936, contains references to socialism. It is important to underline that this book, perhaps after revisions and self-censoring, was published *after* the 1956 revolution, under the reaffirmed socialist regime. For instance, he recalled that during his 1939 Cairo visit, he met with the brother of the Afghan king at the palace of the famous Egyptian feminist Hudā Sha'rāwī (1879–1947), and his Afghan prince according to Germanus, "absorbed progressive doctrines in the Soviet Union."<sup>46</sup>

Although Germanus' description in *In the Light of the Dull Crescent* seems to be devoid of politics, it is possible to read it as a statement of his political loyalty to the regime after 1956. References to socialism—an officially despised ideology in interwar Hungary, especially in 1940—were all the more peculiar if we consider his narratives in the light of the available documents. Possibly due to Teleki's support, Germanus enjoyed the help of the Hungarian official authorities once again.<sup>47</sup> When he arrived in Cairo in November 1939, the Hungarian Royal Legation asked the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to recover some of his confiscated items that were taken in Beirut<sup>48</sup> and Alexandria.<sup>49</sup> Soon Germanus took up his residence at "21 rue Kasr al-Nil,"<sup>50</sup> and socialized again (or, in the 1950s, remembered to socialize) with the crème of Egyptian intellectuals: Ṭaha Ḥusayn, Shawqī Amīn, Salāma Mūsa, Ḥusayn Ḥaykal, Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm, Maḥmūd Taymūr, etc, including the closest friend, Muḥammad Amīn Ḥasūna. Germanus again studied Arabic at Fuad I University (today's Cairo University)

46 Germanus, "A félhold fakó fényében," 176.

47 The Hungarian Foreign Ministry furnished him with a letter asking "all Hungarian authorities, all foreign authorities" to let Germanus freely move in their territories, help and protect him if needed. Letter dated 11 July 1939, in Box 36, MFM.

48 The confiscated items were sent from Beirut to "La Direction de la Surveillance Palestinienne à Caiffa." Letter dated 16 January 1940, from Hungarian Consul in Beirut (Ferdinand Girardi), to Hungarian Royal Legation in Cairo, in 7. tétel, 15. csomó, K90, MOL.

49 Letter dated 15 November 1939, from Hungarian Royal Legation in Cairo to Egyptian Foreign Ministry. Soon Germanus got his papers back, letter dated December 1939 from Egyptian Foreign Ministry to Hungarian Royal Legation in Cairo. Both in 7. tétel, 15. csomó, K90, MOL.

50 Card dated 19 November 1939, from Germanus to Hungarian Royal Legation, in 7. tétel, 15. csomó, K90, MOL.

in Giza as an audit student (at the age of 56),<sup>51</sup> when Ṭaha Ḥusayn was the Dean of the Faculty of Letters. The Hungarian Royal Legation (the name of the Hungarian embassy at the time) asked for a visa for Germanus to travel to Saudi Arabia in February 1940.<sup>52</sup> Germanus, meanwhile, was becoming a proper part of the expat Hungarian community in Egypt.<sup>53</sup>

It is unclear when exactly Germanus left Cairo for Saudi Arabia through Suez, but it should have been sometime after February 1940. In Jeddah he was hosted by his “friend,” ‘Abd Allāh Zaynal (“Zeinel,” perhaps Zaynal ‘Ali Riḏā, Alireza, the owner of Alireza Company). For the welcome dinner, Zaynal invited a number of famous Saudi personalities, including the above-mentioned Muḥammad Naṣīf and his son, the writer and editor of *al-Manhal* magazine ‘Abd al-Quddūs al-Anṣārī, and (‘Abd Allāh) Sulaymān al-Najdī (d. 1965), the first Minister of Finance in the Saudi Kingdom. Germanus later telegraphed King Ibn Sa‘ūd, and Sulaymān al-Najdī received him in his office. In Jeddah, Germanus observed, there was plenty of alcohol in the new offices of the American oil company and every evening Americans had a drinking party as they were sickened by boredom.<sup>54</sup> After two weeks in Jeddah he drove to Mecca where he lodged in Zaynal’s house in the city and performed the *‘umra*. A rich Meccan, ‘Abd al-Ghaffār, invited him to a dinner with many friends, where they listened to the gramophone. After visiting the neighbouring mountains, Germanus returned to Jeddah.

Both WWII and the Cold War are present in Germanus’s narrative. In Jeddah he met with King Ibn Sa‘ūd for the second time and was invited for dinner, where the king presented him with “old Arabic books.” Later Germanus travelled to Medina where he lodged in the Egyptian guesthouse. There he met his old friend Yaḥyā, who had cared for him during his first visit in 1935. In Medina he was keen on meeting with a number of official dignitaries, including the governor of the city, doctors, *‘ulamā’*, and most importantly again with al-Anṣārī, editor of the cultural journal *al-Manhal* (founded 1937). During an evening conversation in Medina, a Saudi friend asked Germanus why he did not mention that the Germans were Muslims, an idea that Nazi radio propaganda in Berlin

51 Permission dated 6 February 1940, in Box 36, MFM.

52 The Consulate asked for a free visa of return in his name from the Foreign Ministry, dated 6 February 1940, in 7. tétel, 15. csomó, K90, MOL.

53 “A magyar kolónia névsora, Kairó” (List of Members of the Hungarian Colony, Cairo), dated 15 March 1940, in 15. csomó, 6. tétel, K90, MOL.

54 This remark about Americans might be understood again within the Cold War atmosphere of the 1950s.

in Arabic was repeating.<sup>55</sup> Germanus ironically answered that he did not discuss matters of religion with the Germans, since they are *shiʿī*, "and with this sentence I not only tossed aside the suspicion [of being a liar], but also struck a death-blow on the Arabic propaganda of Hitler."<sup>56</sup>

In Arabia Germanus continued his research by investigating "the [ancient] trench that the Prophet Muḥammad ordered" around the city and made excursions to the famous places of early Islam. He travelled to Uḥud, Badr, and Khaybar with a caravan, accompanied by his servant Maḥmūd who accompanied him during his visit in 1935. The final destination was Riyadh, the capital of the Najd. The journey was ostensibly an attempt to discover the "still intact" tribes of the Najd. But after leaving the village of al-Sulaymī, the caravan lost its way, leaving the travelers with neither food nor water. Sickened, Germanus arrived in an oasis ("Hamellie" at the "Abenat" mountains) in the territory of the *ḥarbī* Bedouins, where he was cured. When he finally arrived in Riyadh, the progressive Saudis were surprised to see him traveling with a caravan instead of a car or bus. He insisted that the trip was "a study and an experience." Yet, once in Riyadh, apart from his "philological research," he was most interested in horses, since horse-riding was his favorite hobby. His account provides more description of the horses than of the *Najdī* dialect of Arabic at the time, even though he claimed to have spent an entire month in the capital, before returning (by car) to Jeddah.<sup>57</sup>

The 1940 expedition was at least framed as an effort to experience the Bedouin life, but he never published on them or their language. Instead, in his narrative he deployed familiar tropes revealing a touristic fascination with Arabia, bringing to mind the American Syrian Christian Amīn Rihānī's 1920s' longing for a caravan in Arabia.<sup>58</sup> Germanus' account must be again contrasted with the available contemporary documents. He could not have spent a month in Riyadh since his visa request was refused in Jeddah as early as mid-April 1940.<sup>59</sup> He fell ill again, so the Royal Legation had to ask the Egyptian Foreign

55 There was an organized Nazi radio propaganda in Arabic, transmitted from Berlin from 1939. David Motadel, *Islam and Nazi Germany's War* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014), 92–106.

56 Germanus, "A félhold fakó fényében," 189–190.

57 Germanus, "A félhold fakó fényében," 207.

58 Cited in F.E. Peters, *The Hajj: The Muslim Pilgrimage to Mecca and the Holy Places* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 339–340.

59 His telegram, dated 18 April 1940, begs the Legation to get the visa urgently, in 7. tétel, 15. csomó, K90, MOL.

Ministry to obtain the visa for him.<sup>60</sup> His later claim that “the Grand Sheikh of Azhar and my Egyptian friends helped me to get the visa” is thus not correct.<sup>61</sup> Germanus arrived back in Egypt after spending around one and a half months in Saudi Arabia.

In sum, during this second journey, the Hungarian Orientalist strengthened his already existing connections with Egyptian intellectuals in Cairo, further improved his *fushā* Arabic, acquired new friends in Saudi Arabia, and certainly had interesting experiences with the caravan. Unfortunately he never published anything scholarly about the Najd. It is unclear how he returned from Cairo to still neutral Hungary in the early summer of 1940. In Budapest, Regent Horthy promoted him to a higher salary grade in July 1940,<sup>62</sup> possibly inspired by Germanus’s account of the horses in Arabia (Horthy was also a great fan of horses). Germanus still had to prove, nonetheless, that he was not a Jew in 1940. At the time, his conversion to Protestantism before 1918 and marriage to a lady belonging to an old Christian family were enough evidence that he was not connected to Judaism anymore. His Muslim conversion was not mentioned in the documents in this regard. In 1940 these conditions were sufficient to state “I cannot be considered a Jew” according to the law.<sup>63</sup>

### The Cold War in the Hijaz, 1960s

The post-WWII years witnessed the general Sovietization of Hungarian science, including the field of humanities, which started with a controversial form of cultural diplomacy.<sup>64</sup> Germanus survived the Holocaust and the Second World War in his flat in Budapest, without harm or deportation. However, his wife committed suicide for unclear reasons. After the war, Germanus became an important member of the Hungarian de-Nazification trials post-1945. One of Germanus’ former students, Mátyás Rákosi (1892–1971), became the Stal-

60 Letter dated 23 April 1940, from Legation to “Aly Maher Pacha,” Egyptian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. The Egyptian Ministry informed the Legation about the permission of the visa in a letter dated 5 May 1940. Both in 7. tétel, 15. csomó, K90, MOL.

61 Germanus, “A félhold fakó fényében,” 208.

62 Petition dated 6 June 1940 in 6/b 35, KKDH, BCEL, and letter from Bálint Hóman Minister to Regent Horthy, 11 July 1940, K636, 490 d, MOL.

63 “Nyilatkozat” (Statement), dated 30 May 1940, in his personal dossier at 490 d, K636, Magyar Országos Levéltár (Hungarian National Archives; in the following MOL).

64 Tamás Scheibner, *A magyar irodalomtudomány szovjetizálása—A szocialista realista kritika és intézményei, 1945–1953* (Budapest: Ráció Kiadó, 2014), especially Chapter Two.

inist dictator of Soviet-occupied Hungary; and this had possibly helped Germanus to save some friends, such as the famous Count László Almásy (1895–1951), from execution. Nevertheless, Germanus remained in minor university appointments in Stalinist Hungary and maintained only written correspondence with Arab scholars. He also re-married. His public image as an Arabist, carefully built up in the second half of the 1930s, however, lingered on in the 1950s. In 1955, the Egyptian Government of the Free Officers invited Germanus for a lecture, and he was even received by President Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir. This was a sign of friendship between two anti-imperialist states (although the Egyptian government was still undecided on its exact ideology) through cultural relations. In Cairo, Germanus dined at embassies, such as the Saudi one, met with his old Egyptian friends, and travelled to Damascus for another lecture. He reported the experiences of this small lecture tour to the Hungarian authorities back home.<sup>65</sup> Every Hungarian academic traveller was required to report his travels at the time of closed borders. This mission should be also seen in the light of the Czechoslovak arms deal with Egypt in that year.

By the late 1950s and early 1960s, in his eighties, Germanus had become a celebrated scholar in Socialist Hungary and the Middle East. Finally, he enjoyed the success he was able to completely gain in the interwar era. After the 1956 revolution, he helped to restore the international prestige of the regime, especially in the eyes of the "friendly" Arab countries. In 1958, he managed to create a new Department of Arabic Literature and Muslim Cultural History (Arab Irodalmi és Mohamedán Művelődéstörténeti Tanszék, 1958–1962) at the state university Eötvös Lóránd Tudományegyetem (ELTE).<sup>66</sup> Later he was also elected (approved) as a member of the Socialist parliament. In terms of his relations with the Arab and Muslim world, Germanus was elected a member of the Egyptian, Jordanian, and Iraqi academies of sciences and was invited for lectures in India.

The chief manifestation of his political importance was a lecture-tour in Cairo, Damascus, and Baghdad in 1962. Then, in 1964 Germanus was again invited for a conference on the occasion of the millennial celebration of al-Azhar in Cairo. He gave a lecture entitled "Islam in Medieval Hungary."<sup>67</sup> Pres-

65 1955.-ös kairói látogatás—Jelentés pizkozata—Jelentés egyiptomi és szíriai utamról (1955. Február 27.–április 30-ig.), MFM.

66 Eötvös Lóránd Tudományegyetem, Kari Tanácsi jegyzőkönyvek (Minutes of the Meetings of the Faculty of Humanities at the Eötvös Lóránd University of Sciences): 8/a/54 kötet (1956–1957–1958), minutes on 16 October 1958.

67 Printed invitation to the lecture "al-Islām fial-Majar fial-qurūn al-wuṣṭā," from Jāmi'at al-Azhar, Kulliyat al-Dirāsāt al-'Arabiyya, dated 5 March 1964, Box 36, MFM.

ident ‘Abd al-Nāṣir again received him among the invited scholars; his “old friend” Ṭaha Ḥusayn greeted them as well. And the following year he was invited to Saudi Arabia, which he described, together with his travels in the late 1950s, in a new book entitled *A Kelet fényei felé* (*Towards Eastern Lights*, 1966).<sup>68</sup>

Germanus’s invitation to Arabia in 1965 took place in the framework of the Muslim World Congress organized by the Muslim World League (*Rābiṭat al-Ālam al-Islāmī*), under the patronage of the new King Fayṣal (r. 1964–1975), who swore in as king in November 1964.<sup>69</sup> The conference was conveniently scheduled in the same period as the Hajj in April 1965 (Dhū al-Ḥijja 1384).<sup>70</sup> The event functioned in numerous ways as a symbolic occasion in the international relations of the Arab countries. 1965 is often viewed as an important moment in Saudi Arabian attempts to counterbalance the idea of Pan-Arabism promoted by Egypt with their support of Pan-Islamism. The Congress was also an opportunity for visitors to recognize King Fayṣal’s reign as legitimate. And, finally, the conference was possibly also a reaction to the great Egyptian conference about al-Azhar in 1964. Germanus avoided any mention of political stakes or context in his printed book in 1966. His visit, nonetheless, seems to have had high diplomatic importance for Hungarian authorities, too. He received his passport within one day—miraculous speed in state bureaucracy.

This was also a good opportunity for Germanus to make the Hajj again. During the trip he brought along his second wife, Kató Kajári (1903–1991), who also converted to Islam and took the Arabic name ‘Ā’isha. She also performed the Hajj, though it is not clear whether she sought to do so primarily for the “sake of her husband,” as Germanus wrote, or out of her own devotion. Salāḥ al-Dīn al-Najjār, whom Germanus described as “an old friend of the royal dynasty,” was sent to Budapest to personally collect the old scholar and his wife. From Budapest they flew to Beirut via Vienna and then on to Jeddah. In his book *Towards Eastern Lights*, Germanus now compared interwar Jeddah, which was the “plain country of the romantic Middle Ages,” with that of 1965 where the “oil-wealth erased its past.”<sup>71</sup>

‘Ā’isha and ‘Abd al-Karīm lived in the American-style Kandara Palace Hotel. This fascinated the old Hungarian Muslim Orientalist—it was certainly luxurious compared to the quality of life in Socialist Hungary. They looked for his

68 Germanus Gyula, *A Kelet fényei felé* (Budapest: Táncsics Könyvkiadó, 1966).

69 Holden and Johns, *The House of Saud*, 240.

70 Typewritten Arabic invitation, from Rābiṭat al-Ālam al-Islāmī, from al-Amīn al-Āmm, dated 29/10/1384 (3 March 1965), in Box 36, MFM.

71 Germanus, *A Kelet fényei felé*, 282.

"old friends." Germanus found the aging Muḥammad Naṣīf and together they mourned the old days and Naṣīf's deceased son, the historian Ḥusayn.<sup>72</sup> The couple also visited 'Abd Allāh Zaynal (Alireza?), another old friend, who had become by that time a very wealthy man. Finally, Germanus and his wife were received by King Fayṣal in his Jeddah Palace. While Germanus discussed the significance of "religious law" with the King, his wife chatted with two princesses about fashion.<sup>73</sup> As Germanus described these visits to his Hungarian readership, he highlighted the symbolic importance of a Muslim Orientalist from Eastern Europe for the Saudi Kingdom.

Despite the high social life and the congress, the Hajj was the couple's main goal. Najjār's family prepared Kató for the pilgrimage rituals. The Saudi government sent a special car for them and the two old Hungarian Muslims arrived in their *iḥrām* in the holy city, after a little stop to pose for photos. They circled seven times around the Ka'ba, but could not shuttle between al-Ṣafā and al-Marwa. The Germanuses were put into wheelchairs and pushed seven times between the hills. They were extremely tired (images 8.3 and 8.4). After this, Najjār took them to a palace for a rest but the old couple was so exhausted that they had to be taken to the hospital in Jeddah.<sup>74</sup> This means that 'Ā'isha and 'Abd al-Karīm performed the *'umra* instead of the Hajj; for Germanus, it was his third time in Mecca.

Back in Jeddah Germanus gave a lecture about the relation between Islam and natural sciences to a large audience of Muslim scholars. After this event, Kató asked her husband to return to Hungary. They were both exhausted and she did not want to die in Saudi Arabia. Germanus paid a last visit to Muḥammad Ibn Surūr al-Ṣabbān (1898–1971), the minister of Finance and General Secretary of the Muslim World League in Mecca 1962, in order to request Ṣabbān to read his second lecture during the conference. An Arabic letter, sent by the General Secretary of the Muslim World League, expressed great sorrow over his early departure.<sup>75</sup> In the company of Najjār they went to the airport of Jeddah. Describing this final departure, Germanus wrote evocatively: "Arabia sent his glowing sun's breath of fire, the last message to his faithful wanderer."<sup>76</sup>

72 Germanus, *A Kelet fényei felé*, 284.

73 Germanus, *A Kelet fényei felé*, 285.

74 Germanus, *A Kelet fényei felé*, 288–290.

75 Typewritten Arabic letter, from Rābiṭat al-Ālam al-Islāmī, from al-Amīn al-Āmm, dated 2/12/1384 (3 April 1965), in Box 36, MFM.

76 Germanus, *A Kelet fényei felé*, 291.



FIGURE 8.3  
*Kató Kajári, Ms. Germanus, in  
 Mecca (1965)*  
 2843-91, HUNGARIAN  
 MUSEUM OF GEOGRAPHY,  
 PUBLISHED WITH  
 PERMISSION

Despite the fact that there was no further need to boost his personal fame or legitimize himself in the Hungarian university system, Germanus quickly published *Towards Eastern Lights* in 1966. It became quickly a successful book, which blended the style and nostalgia of an interwar scholar with popular academic details in a very entertaining style. In this period, apart from enjoying parties at embassies and publishing his most important scholarly contribution to Hungarian Orientalism—a history of Arabic literature<sup>77</sup>—Germanus helped some of his students secure travel grants and secured for himself more state recognitions. He also continued to accept invitations and returned to give talks in Egypt. By the end of his life, he had come to embody both Hungarian Orien-

77 Gyula Germanus, *Az arab irodalom története* ([Budapest]: Gondolat, 1962).



FIGURE 8.4  
*Gyula Germanus during his  
last pilgrimage in Mecca (1965)*  
2842-91, HUNGARIAN  
MUSEUM OF GEOGRAPHY,  
PUBLISHED WITH  
PERMISSION

talism and a vital connection between the Middle East and Eastern Europe in the Cold War.

### Conclusion: Pilgrimage as Image

This chapter has shown the modern Hajj as a means and an occasion of learning in the twentieth century. Through the adventures of Gyula Germanus we can observe how the Hajj was instrumentalized for the production of popular travel description and for knowledge acquisition in terms of language and religion. Through his travels and his personal connections with intellectuals in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, Germanus himself became a subject worthy of study. He was both a Muslim and a popularly acclaimed explorer who translated expe-

rience into scholarly fame. In the Socialist era, his travels, personal relations, and knowledge were much valued by both the Hungarian and the Arab governments. His pilgrimage became his image.

By critically comparing Germanus's printed narratives with the available documentation, it is possible to discover discrepancies in this image. The point of noting this, however, was not simply to question seeming inaccuracies, but rather to reveal both the potential *and* the limits of his experiences and their translatability to cultural capital.

Though originally not an Arabist, and without any significant scholarly achievements, Germanus nonetheless successfully transformed himself into the head of an Arabic Studies Department after the failed revolution of 1956. The Hajj and Islam established his credits for the larger public. At the same time, despite acquiring a good grasp of literary Arabic, establishing friendships in the region, performing the Hajj, and visiting the Najd in 1940, Germanus was unable to make much scholarly use of this knowledge. The reasons are likely varied—from personal shortcomings to WWII to the isolation of Hungarian scholarship during the Stalinist and Socialist era. The Hungarian philologist establishment looked upon him with understandable suspicion. *Hājj* Germanus became the member of three Arab academies in the 1950s–1960s, but he was never elected a member of the Hungarian one. While this failure shows that travel and pilgrimage as cultural capitals could be no more translatable into scholarly recognition—a basic development in the twentieth-century institutionalization of knowledge—Germanus' works embody an anthropological interest resulting in a popular Orientalist discourse in Eastern Europe during the Cold War.

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