

Egyptian Royals autographs

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by Zoltán Márián

Once upon a time there was a beautiful Hungarian girl who became the Queen of Egypt.

Marianne May Török de Szendrő was born in 1877. Her mother was Countess Sofia von Vetter and her stepfather was Theodor Puskas the world-famous Hungarian inventor of telephone-exchange.

She was an independent girl, she wrote articles to different newspapers and played the piano. In Austria at the Theresianum /Academy of education for officials and diplomats/ – where her brother was enrolled – countess Marianne May met the young Egyptian Prince Abbas in a ball.

In 1900 she met Abbas again in Paris, who already was the Ruler of Egypt, Khedive Abbas Hilmi II. (1874-1944), (reign: 1892-1914) They fell in love, and Abbas Hilmi invited her to Cairo.

She went to Egypt and their romance culminated into a secret marriage. Ten years later in 1910 they took an official marriage by the Grand Mufti of Egypt. Marianne May converted into Islam and she became Princess Djavidan Hanum, /Djanan Davidan/ second wife of the Ruler of Egypt, de facto Queen of Egypt.

However they divorced in 1913.

Djavidan – she used her royal name until her death – moved to Berlin, to Paris, finally to Austria. She worked as an interpreter, sold cosmetics, gave piano concerts, painted pictures. About her royal years she wrote her book „Harem”.

In 1968 at the age of 91, she died in Graz forgotten by everybody. On her grave only two words were written: „Djanan Djavidan”.

I was so interested in this Hungarian woman who was not known in Hungary either. Since 1910, no article has been published about her. I took a hard investigation to know more and more about her life and decided to get her signature for my collection.

I contacted Khedive Abbas Hilmi's daughter-in-law.

Princess Neslishah (1921-) gave me some data, but it revealed, that the official Egyptian Royal Family did not like Djavidan „Her name was taboo in the Palace, we never talked about her....” Neslishah wrote me.

In Austria I tried to find some persons whose still knew Djavidan personally. Finally I contacted a gentleman who gave me a wonderful gift. It is a colourful drawing that had been created by Djavidan and signed by her in blue ink. This drawing – „Harem ladies” – was Djavidan's gift to the gentleman's parents around 1950.

An other gentleman I met gave me a postcard Djavidan had written to his mother. The postcard is from Venice. He also gave me two original photos, one showing Djavidan as the Muslim Queen.

The other one was taken in her home when she was an elderly lady.

Prince Abbas Hilmi, (1941-) grandson of the Khedive and son of Princess Neslishah was also kind to send me his signed photograph.

Two most important members of the present Royal Family:

Princess Fawzia / 1921-/ sister of King Farouk of Egypt, first wife of Shah Reza Pahlavi of Iran /1939-1948/ former Empress of Iran /1941-1948/.

She is the most senior member of Muhammad Ali Dynasty. After the Egyptian Revolution she has been living in total voluntary seclusion. For this reason it seemed nearly impossible to contact her. From year to year I tried to find her but no success. Finally a far but kind relation helped me who placed my request before Princess Fawzia. Her Imperial Highness has been so kind as to sign a photo for me. Years later, I contacted her once again and she has signed a second picture for me.

Princess Fawzia and the Shah of Iran have got one daughter. After their divorce, Fawzia has got married with Shirin Bey who was an Egyptian Minister. The couple had two children. The Princess will be 88 in November.

King Ahmed Fouad II /1952-/ last King of Egypt / 26 July 1952- 18 June 1953/

He is the nephew of Princess Fawzia. He ascended the throne upon the abdication of his father King Farouk. Reigned for less than a year. King Ahmed Fuad II was Egypt and Sudan's last monarch and the last of the Muhammad Ali Dynasty which had ruled since 1805. His short reign came to an end when Egypt was declared a republic on 18 June 1953.

He has three children. The former King does not live in a public life. He travels a lot, it is difficult to locate him. After a long time I have received his dedicated photograph with the kind help of a close friend to him.