



Derviš M. Korkut: A Biography

Rescuer of the Sarajevo Haggadah

HIKMET KARČIĆ

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Sarajevo 2020

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Acknowledgements

The year 2019 marked the 50th anniversary of Derviš M. Korkut's death. A man who survived two empires, the Ottoman and the Austro-Hungarian, two kingdoms, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the Nazi-puppet Independent State of Croatia, and, finally, Communist Yugoslavia. Half a century after his death, a publication dedicated to the man behind the rescue of the Sarajevo Haggadah seems overdue. This book is a result of a research project which was carried out at the Institute for Islamic Tradition of Bosniaks. It is based on both the existing literature and archival materials. Finding documentation on Korkut has been a challenge, and I would like to thank the staff of the Archives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Gazi Husrev-bey Library, the Historical Archives of Sarajevo, Sarajevo City Museum, Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Yad Vashem for their help. Special thanks are due to Afan Abazović from Zenica for his amazing contacts, which helped me gather important documents. I am grateful to Professors Adnan Jahić and Marko Attila Hoare for reviewing the manuscript and providing valuable feedback. I am also thankful to Fikret Karčić, Peter Lippman, Senada Tahirović, and Desmond Maurer for their careful reading and comments. Finally, I would like to thank my colleagues from the Institute, Director Ferid Dautović, Sumeja Ljevaković-Subašić, and Elvir Duranović for their support and advice.

Introduction

The Balkans, as Winston Churchill put it, produce more history than they can handle. Hard times are said to create strong men, and life in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the start of the twentieth century was hard. The Austro-Hungarian Empire occupied the country in 1878 and annexed it in 1908. This was followed by the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913, which decimated the Bosniak and Albanian populations of Serbia and Montenegro. Then came the assassination in Sarajevo of Austro-Hungarian Archduke Franz Ferdinand by the young Serb terrorist Gavrilo Princip, on 28 June 1914, and the start of the First World War. The end of that war in 1918 brought the establishment of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which marginalized Bosniaks and resulted in “peace-time” crimes against them by the Serbian Army. They were especially evident in 1918 and 1919, causing the world powers to raise the position of Bosniaks and other Muslims in the newly formed Kingdom during negotiation of the St. Germain Treaty of September 1919. The treaty granted the Muslims of the Kingdom minority rights.

Ten years later, in 1929, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was proclaimed, but the status of Bosniaks and other Muslims had changed little. Continued discrimination, poor prospects for education and work, and anti-Muslim policies like the agreement on demographic-engineering between Yugoslavia and Turkey put further strain on the position of Bosniaks

and other Muslims in Yugoslavia. These were the hard times that created Derviš M. Korkut, a Bosniak Muslim intellectual, rescuer of the Sarajevo Haggadah, and protector of minorities.

Although his work has received little recognition, it left an indelible mark on the history of the Balkans. History is often cruel like that to those with good intentions. Korkut was primarily an intellectual, an honest man who understood well his people's social and political circumstances, at home and abroad. Nonetheless, he was misunderstood, undervalued, and ultimately forgotten.

The Sarajevo Haggadah is one of Bosnia and Herzegovina's most famous cultural treasures. The story of how it was saved during the Second World War is one of the most intriguing told of that period, but the person behind the rescue tends to receive little attention. The aim of this booklet is to contribute to the narrative by providing a first biography of the man who rescued the Haggadah, a man who lived in one of the most difficult times in Bosnian and Herzegovinian history.

After Korkut's death, a close colleague wrote:

His life's work is a priceless treasury of living words, combativeness, commitment to the victory of truth, humanism, and a fascinating suavity that behooves the perfect Muslim. Before he died, he lacked the opportunity to publish, despite having a treasure trove of material ready for publication. Few of us understood all the obstacles he faced and as a result of which his profound thoughts, general schemes, concepts and considered views on contemporary

social problems were published only sporadically, as opportunity arose. These are pearls of true discourse, scattered in domestic and foreign journals and in several languages.¹

As his works are scattered, so are the sources for Korkut's life, and there is no standard comprehensive biography. This publication aims to present both his life and work based on Bosnian printed and archival sources. The first work published on his life is Alija Bejtić's *Derviš M. Korkut kao kulturni i društveni radnik*. Published in Sarajevo in 1974, it is a fount of information.² Despite its brevity, it offers insight into Korkut's family background and scholarly work. A second important source is Džemail Ibrahimović's master's thesis, which dealt with the Korkut family,³ which was a prominent one and included members who left their mark in the fields of Islamic Studies, History, and Oriental Studies in the region. An early English-language source on Korkut was a piece in *The New Yorker* by Geraldine Brooks.⁴ There are archival documents related to Korkut in the Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Historical Archive in Sarajevo, the Gazi Husrev-bey Library in Sarajevo, and the Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

¹ "Naši merhumi: Derviš M. Korkut", *Glasnik*, 1969, p. 542.

² Alija Bejtić, *Derviš M. Korkut kao kulturni i društveni radnik*, Biblioteka Pokopnog društva Bakije, 1974.

³ Džemail Ibranović, *Porodica Korkut i njen doprinos našoj kulturnoj baštini*, Fakultet islamskih nauka, 2001.

⁴ Geraldine Brooks, "The Book of Exodus", *The New Yorker*, 2007, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/12/03/the-book-of-exodus>.

Written to honor the memory of Derviš M. Korkut, this booklet is a modest attempt to accord him the place in history he deserves, as someone who not only worked hard and honestly, but, when the time came, did what was right regardless of the consequences.

Life and Education

Alija Bejtić, a famous Bosniak historian and publicist and close friend and associate of Derviš, wrote a detailed account of the Korkut family. According to him, the family came originally from Ortiješ near Buna, a small village a few kilometers from the city of Mostar in Herzegovina.⁵ A branch of the Korkuts moved to Travnik, a small town in Central Bosnia, in the 1830s. Its head at the time was Sheikh Derviš Muhamed Korkut, who served as principal (*muderis*) at the Elči Ibrahim-Pasha madrasa and mufti of Travnik. He was also Sheikh of the Travnik *tekke* or dervish lodge. Like other religious figures in Ottoman Bosnia, he studied philology, law, and theology in Istanbul.

His youngest son, Ahmed Munib, completed his education in Travnik, becoming principal of the primary school (*ruždija*) there in 1874.⁶ In 1899 he became a member of the *Ulema-medžlis* (Council of the Learned), the governing body of the Islamic Community. In 1914, he was briefly deputy *Reisu-l-ulema* or Grand Mufti of the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Ahmed Munib married Šahida Bišćević, and they had three sons: Sakib, Besim and Derviš.

The eldest of these, Sakib, also studied in Travnik and then Sarajevo. Politically active, in 1920 he was

⁵ Bejtić gives Korkut as his source. See Bejtić, p. 8.

⁶ Bejtić, p. 20.

one of the founders of the Yugoslav Muslim Organization (*Jugoslovenska muslimanska organizacija* - JMO), the main Bosniak Muslim political party in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and editor of its newspaper *Pravda* (Justice).⁷

Besim, the youngest, went to Al-Azhar in Cairo, Egypt, after his studies in Travnik and Sarajevo. He then worked in secondary schools, including the Shariah Judicial School (*Šerijatska sudačka škola*) and the Shariah Gymnasium (*Šerijatska gimnazija*), both in Sarajevo. After the Second World War, he joined the new Oriental Institute of the University of Sarajevo.⁸ Besim was probably the most famous Korkut, as he translated the Qur'an into Bosnian.

Derviš was Ahmed's middle son, born on May 5, 1888. He moved to Sarajevo in 1899, when his father became a member of the *Ulema-medžlis*. He finished primary school in 1901, graduating from the Senior Gymnasium (*Velika gimnazija*) in 1909.⁹ That same year he left for Istanbul to study Theology at the University of Istanbul (*Darülfünun/İlahiyyat Şubesi*).¹⁰ The vibrancy of the city impressed and influenced

⁷ Bejtić, p. 21.

⁸ Bejtić, p. 22.

⁹ Better known as the First Gymnasium (*Prva gimnazija*), this was a school attended by major political, cultural and literary figures.

¹⁰ Korkut is also reported to have attended a private calligraphy school in Sarajevo held by Ali Šerif ef. Fabinović. Fabinović was calligraphy teacher at the Sarajevo *ruždija* (Ottoman secondary school) and the horologist (*muwaqqit*) at the Imperial mosque in Sarajevo. See Mahmut Traljić, "Mekteb-salnama za hidžretsku 1325 i 1326 godinu", *Takvim*, 1998, p. 268.

him. Indeed, its pre-World War I political turmoil and revolutionary ideas shaped the young Korkut.

In February 1910, Austria-Hungary proclaimed a National Constitution (Statute) for Bosnia and Herzegovina, crowning a lengthy fight for autonomy by the Bosnians. Korkut was in Istanbul, but a few months later wrote an article on it for the *Kürsi-i Milel/La Tribune des Peuples*, a newspaper owned by a Polish émigré. According to Harun Buljina, Korkut's article on Bosnia was a fusion of the constitutionalist discourse of the Young Turk era, Polish romantic nationalism, and Hamidian Pan-Islamist concerns.

In Korkut's own words, "In this way, promulgating a constitution, the government is legalizing and disguising an absolutist regime. (...) The Bosnian people, aware of its rights, has not allowed itself to be in the least discouraged, so that the granting of this constitution, no matter how illusory in itself, is nonetheless a victory for public opinion — the people will prevail."¹¹

After his studies, he returned to Travnik in August 1914, the First World War already underway. Under Austro-Hungarian law he was exempt from military service as a theologian, and, once back home, he started giving private tuition in religious studies, Turkish, French, and German. On July 1, 1916, he was appointed to a post teaching religious studies and French at the Teacher-training School in Derventa.

¹¹ Pobro Bey, "Bosna-Hersek / Bosnie-Herzégovine," *Kürsi-i Milel/La Tribune des Peuples*, no. 2 (May 13, 1910), cited in Buljina in Harun Buljina, *Empire, Nation, and the Islamic World: Bosnian Muslim Reformists between the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires, 1901-1914*, Ph.D. dissertation submitted to Columbia University, 2019., p. 170.

After a year, however, he was called up for army service and by July 1917 was serving as military imam, with the rank of Captain 2nd Class, at the Vienna Military Command, where he was assigned to prisoners of war and hospitals. That October, he was relocated to a hospital for Turkish soldiers in Hodonín.¹² In December, he was sent to the Seconda Socha Command and service in Ljubljana. His last transfer was to a hospital in Udine in Italy, where he stayed until the end of the war.¹³ With the establishment of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, Korkut returned to Derventa to teach.

Some insight into Korkut's work as teacher may be gleaned from a note by the director of the Teacher-training School, Đ. Pavič:

Derviš ef. Korkut is healthy and physically well-developed. A high-school graduate with a broad self-acquired education, his level of erudition is far beyond what we generally find with Islamic religious teachers, and his understanding of world affairs completely equal to the other members of the teaching body. He is very diligent, supplementing his education with continuous reading.

¹² Moravia, now in the Czech Republic.

¹³ Mina Kujović, "Prilog biografiji Derviša M. Korkuta", *Arhiv Bosne i Hercegovine*, 2009, p.171-178. The Bosnian historian Zijad Šehić has found Korkut's name on a list of reserve military imams for 1918. See: Zijad Šehić, "Vojni imami u bosanskohercegovačkim jedinicama u okviru austrougarske armije : 1878-1918". *Godišnjak BZK Preporod*, 2006.

He is zealous and correct at work. Although a new teacher, his work with students occasions no complaints. In the teachers' mess, he is a highly respectful and affable colleague, and obedient to the directorate.

His private life is settled and unobjectionable.

There are no signs of his having become involved with politics since being in service or having been so before. Nonetheless, the recent political and cultural turmoil among our Muslims, in which close relatives of his have participated, has had an impact on him and can cause him to react without cause. Under such influence, he may embark on criticism, but stops himself, though it is unclear whether this is from conviction or caution.¹⁴

In his personnel files from his time in Derventa, he entered "Bosniak" for nationality and "Muslim" for religion. He also recorded himself as speaking Serbo-Croatian, Turkish, German, French and Arabic, with an understanding of English.¹⁵

With the end of Austro-Hungarian rule and the establishment of a new state, the Bosniak intelligentsia realized that protecting their rights would require them to be politically active. They therefore determined to form the Yugoslav Muslim Organisation (*Jugoslovenska muslimanska organizacija*), under the leadership of Ibrahim Maglajlić, Mufti of Tuzla,

¹⁴ Written on June 27, 1917. Kujović: "Prilog biografiji...."

¹⁵ ABiH, Zbirka dosjea državnih službenika, Osobnik, Derviš M. Korkut.

of whom Sakib Korkut, Derviš's brother, was a close associate.

Representing a small minority in the new Kingdom, Bosniak religious and political leaders sought ways to protect their rights in a state that was rapidly becoming hostile to Bosniaks and Albanians. The Serbian army entered Bosnia and Herzegovina in triumph in November 1918, where certain Bosniaks loyal to Austro-Hungary were considered collaborators. That, combined with anti-Muslim bigotry, resulted in attacks on Bosniaks and their property throughout the country, especially in the Sanjak. The Grand Mufti or *Reisu-l-ulema*, Džemaludin Čaušević, gave an interview to the French newspaper, *Le Temps*, claiming that "the hidden hostility of our Orthodox neighbors has turned into open hate, unfortunately with the approval of the [Serb] occupation authorities."¹⁶ According to Bosnian historian Adnan Jahić, the Belgrade government considered "violence against Bosniaks more of a political than a moral or humanitarian problem," and an "unnecessary burden" for the newly formed country keen to secure "internal and external legitimacy."¹⁷

On September 10, 1919, the Treaty of St. Germain was signed in Paris, guaranteeing, amongst

¹⁶ Xavier Bougarel. "Farewell to the Ottoman Legacy? Islamic Reformism and Revivalism in Inter-War Bosnia-Herzegovina". Nathalie Clayer / Eric Germain. *Islam in Inter-War Europe*, Hurst, pp. 313-343, 2008.

¹⁷ Adnan Jahić, *Islamska zajednica u Bosni i Hercegovini za vrijeme monarhističke Jugoslavije (1918-1941)*, Bošnjačke nacionalne zajednice za Grad Zagreb i Zagrebačku županiju i Islamske zajednice u Hrvatskoj - Medžlis Islamske zajednice Zagreb, p. 98.

other things, the institutional protection of Muslim rights in the Kingdom. Article 10 states:

The Serb-Croat-Slovene State undertakes to ensure protection to the mosques, cemeteries and other Musulman religious establishments. Full recognition and facilities shall be assured to Musulman pious foundations (Wakfs) and religious and charitable establishments now existing, and the Serb-Croat-Slovene Government shall not refuse any of the necessary facilities for the creation of new religious and charitable establishments guaranteed to other private establishments of this nature.¹⁸

This treaty extended international legal protection to Muslims in Yugoslavia.¹⁹ In theory this was good, but in reality Bosniaks and Muslims in Yugoslavia faced discrimination, land confiscation, involuntary exile, and atrocities.²⁰ Despite all this, the Bosniak Muslims were in a better position than the Albanians.

In 1920, Korkut began work at the Regional Madrasa in Sarajevo (*Okružna medresa u Sarajevu*) as prefect and Turkish teacher.

¹⁸ *Treaty between the Principal Allied and Associated Powers and the Serb-Croat-Slovene State*. St. Germain-en-Laye, 10 September 1919.

¹⁹ Gezim Krasniqi, *Unrecognized alike, yet not equal: Albanians and Bosnian Muslims in interwar Europe 1918-1941*, Master's Thesis, submitted to the Central European University, 2009.

²⁰ In 1924, several hundred Bosniak Muslims were massacred in Šahovići, Montenegro by Montenegrin and Serb perpetrators. The entire incident was quickly covered up by the Yugoslav government.

In November 1920, the first elections were held in the Kingdom. The Serb Minister of the Interior, Milorad Drašković, initiated a move to strip Yugoslav Jews of their franchise. Korkut took part in the campaign against Drašković's policies, giving a speech in the town of Derventa in favor of the Jews. His brother Sakib was elected to Parliament²¹ and it was probably his recommendation that Derviš started to work at the new Ministry of Religions in Belgrade in June 1921, where he was appointed head of the Muslim department in the Ministry. Like his brother, albeit to a much smaller extent, Derviš became involved in politics through the Yugoslav Muslim Organisation.

On June 28, 1921, the Constitutional Assembly adopted the first Constitution of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, with YMO support. During drafting of the new *Law on the Islamic Religious Community*, Korkut and several other Bosniaks clashed with members of Nikola Pašić's Radical Party, which resulted in a petition from 48 Radical Party MPs, archpriest Anđelković, deacon Božo Lukić, and fellow Muslims Hasan Rebac and Mufti Mehmed Zeki that resulted Korkut being removed from his position and then resigning entirely from the public service on June 22, 1923.²²

In his personnel file, Korkut wrote of the event:

...I remained in the job until June 24, 1923, when my resignation, tendered at the explicit request of the deputy Minister of Religions and the then Minister of Justice Dr. Ninko

²¹ Bejtić, p. 21.

²² Bejtić, p. 27.

Perić, was accepted within a matter of hours. There was no real reason for my being excluded from the public service. I had all the necessary qualifications and was not under criminal or disciplinary investigation. In fact, I had been awarded the Order of St. Sava, Fourth Class. It was all an intrigue cooked up by officials at the Ministry of Religion and carried out at the instigation of forty members of the Radical Caucus. They had been misled by Mr. Božo Lukić, deputy Minister of Religions, who deceived most of them into signing an initiative they had not even read, demanding I and several other officials in good standing of the Ministry of Religions be discharged. Even though my resignation was forced, I did not receive the slightest reparations or the option of another position. After seven years of correct and conscientious service to the people, I was thrown onto the street.²³

Korkut's colleague, Muhamed Hadžijahić, wrote in 1941 of Korkut's Belgrade ordeal and published the only known interview with him. In it, Korkut claimed the Serb establishment in Belgrade was against a unified Islamic Community for all Yugoslav Muslims and that Nikola Pašić, the Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, had declared at a meeting, "So long as I am alive, I cannot allow the Muslims to form a single unified religious organization, because it will develop into a unified political organization."²⁴ Korkut's fight

²³ Mina Kujović, p. 172.

²⁴ Muhamed Hadžijahić, "Hasan Rebac i muslimanska vjerska autonomija", *Hrvatski dnevnik*, January 8, 1941, p. 18.

for Muslim religious autonomy would continue in the years to come.

In spring 1922, conflict within the Yugoslav Muslim Organisation led to the formation of a splinter group, headed by Ibrahim Maglajlić and Sakib Korkut. It later became the Yugoslav Muslim National Organisation (*Jugoslovenska muslimanska narodna organizacija*). The main body of the YMO wanted to break off all cooperation with the government, while the fraction was for continuing in coalition.

Derviš left Belgrade and returned to Sarajevo to take up the post of General Secretary of the new party. It performed very poorly at the 1923 elections, however. Korkut nonetheless stayed with the party until its dissolution in late 1924.²⁵

After this political defeat, most members of the YMNO returned to their original professions. Korkut had no job to return to, however, and he and his brother Sakib decided to go back to their hometown of Travnik. For almost two and a half years, Korkut had no full-time employment. In March 1927, he was finally appointed curator and librarian of the Balkan Institute at the National Museum.

In the meantime, the political situation in the country was worsening. On January 6, 1929, the King, Aleksandar Karađorđević, established a dictatorship. Croatian and Macedonian separatists responded by calling for independence. By October 1929, Karađorđević had renamed the country the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

In 1928, Korkut was appointed to the executive board of *Gajret*, which included several leading

²⁵ Bejtić, p. 28.

Bosniak intellectuals.²⁶ In 1938, *Gajret's* newspaper carried a small notice that a boarding school for Bosniak children would be opening in Sarajevo. Korkut was one of the donors for the school.²⁷

Korkut's employment at the National Museum did not last long. In March 1929, his brother Sakib, who was Mufti of Travnik, died. By August 1929, Korkut had been appointed in his place. Korkuts had held the position for almost a hundred years, ever since Korkut's great-grandfather Muhamed Derviš Korkut had arrived in the town. After less than a year, however, Korkut found himself on the move again. A new *Law on the Islamic Religious Community in Yugoslavia* was passed and then promulgated on July 25, 1930. It abolished the 1909 *Constitution for the independent administration of Islamic religious affairs, endowments, and education in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (*Štatut za autonomnu upravu islamskih vjerskih i vakufsko-mearifskih poslova u Bosni i Hercegovini*), along with the muftiates in certain towns, Travnik and Bihać among them. Some scholars have seen this as aimed at suppressing the YMO's political opponents within the Islamic Community.²⁸

By mid-1930, Korkut had already found a new position, in Cetinje, Montenegro, where he was appointed curator of the State Museum. While there,

²⁶ *Gajret*, no. 9, 1928, p. 351.

²⁷ *Gajret*, no.7-9, 1938, p. 137.

²⁸ For more on the new law and the effects it had on the Islamic Community see: Adnan Jahić, *Islamska zajednica u Bosni i Hercegovini za vrijeme monarhističke Jugoslavije (1918-1941)*, Bošnjačke nacionalne zajednice za Grad Zagreb i Zagrebačku županiju i Islamske zajednice u Hrvatskoj - Medžlis Islamske zajednice Zagreb.

he became active in the work of the Islamic Community in Belgrade. His former YMNO colleague, Ibrahim Maglajlić, was appointed Reisu-l-ulema in Belgrade. As a result, Korkut lived and worked between Belgrade and Cetinje for the next seven years.

In 1931, King Aleksandar imposed a new Yugoslav Constitution which served largely as cover for continued royal dictatorship. During this period, Korkut spearheaded a pioneer project in Belgrade initiated by the Islamic Religious Community to establish an official *Herald of the Islamic Community* (*Glasnik Vrhovnog Starješinstva Islamske vjerske zajednice*).²⁹ His work as editor of *Glasnik* laid the foundations for what is now the oldest publication of the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In late 1932, Korkut came to Sarajevo to the Gazi Husrev-bey Madrasa to meet friends and colleagues and invite them to contribute.³⁰ He remained editor for a full three years, until 1936.³¹ The quality of the articles and translations published during his term is outstanding.³²

Meanwhile, during an official visit to Marseille, France, in October 1934, King Aleksandar was assassinated by a Macedonian nationalist. His death led

²⁹ ARIZBIH, Uredništvo Glasnika, VIS-1-30/1933, 5 January 1933.

³⁰ Hamdija Kreševljaković, "Naše prijateljovanje", *El-Hidaje*, broj 2-3, 19 rujna 1944. Derviš had great faith in his colleague Mehmed Handžić and persuaded him to write for *Glasnik*.

³¹ Although there is no information available, this change is most probably related to the retirement of Reis Maglajlić.

³² He wrote a total of three articles in *Glasnik*, the last published in 1935.

to establishment of a three-member regency which lasted until Aleksandar's son Petar came of age.

In September 1935, a Congress of European Muslims was held in Geneva, Switzerland. The Yugoslav Muslim delegation included Korkut and Salim Muftić, President of the Ulama Council, the highest religious body of the Islamic Community.³³ Korkut presented a paper in French on the ethnic composition of the Muslims in Yugoslavia. Unfortunately, the paper remains unpublished.

In September 1937, Korkut returned to work at the National Museum in Sarajevo. His return to Sarajevo and withdrawal from *Glasnik* may have been connected with the retirement of Reis Maglajlić in 1936. Fehim Spaho served as interim Reis and was officially confirmed in the post some two years later in 1938. Spaho also took over briefly as editor of *Glasnik* after Korkut left. There had been bad blood between the Spahos and the Korkuts, going back to the internal YMO disputes.

There was a lot of resistance to Spaho's appointment as Reis. It was seen by some as political interference in Bosniak religious affairs. What is more, it meant that both of the leading Bosniak organizations were now led by brothers, with Mehmed Spaho as President of the YMO and Fehim Spaho as Reis-ul-ulema. Korkut openly opposed the election of Fehim Spaho. In June 1937, along with a number of prominent Bosniak intellectuals, including Mujaga Merhemić, Šakir ef. Mesihović, and Šemsi-beg

³³ Fikret Karčić, "The Bosnian Muslims and Islamic International Networks: "The Age of Conventions"", *Bosnian Studies*, No.1, 2007, p. 114-121.

Salihbegović, he coauthored an open letter on “The Illegitimacy of the Election of Fehim Spaho for Reis-ul-ulema” (“Protuzakonitosti kod izbora Fehima Spahe za reisa”), in which they warned that “We emphasize our deep conviction that the decision to run Fehim Spaho as candidate and his appointment to the position of reis-ul-ulema is a reflection of the culture of political opportunism in which Muslims today live, which influential current Muslim political actors are abusing.”³⁴

On June 29, 1939, Mehmed Spaho, the strongest and most influential Bosniak political leader, died in a Belgrade hotel room. There are claims that he was poisoned.³⁵ Less than two months later, on August 26th, Dragiša Cvetković, the Yugoslav prime minister, and Vladko Maček, leader of the Croat Peasant Party, signed an agreement to decentralize the central government and create an autonomous Croatian province (*banovina*) that included large parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina.³⁶

In 1940, Korkut married Servet Ljuža from Đakovica in Kosovo. Korkut knew her father and they had fallen in love during his visits to Kosovo. Their new life quickly changed as World War Two broke out.³⁷ They had two children during the following couple of years, a son Munib and a daughter Abida.

³⁴ HAS, B-228/b, “Protuzakonitosti kod izbora Fehima Spahe za reisa”, dated June 7, 1937.

³⁵ For more on Spaho see: Husnija Kamberović, *Mehmed Spaho. Politička biografija*, Vijeće Kongresa bošnjačkih intelektualaca, Sarajevo 2009.

³⁶ Robert J. Donia, *Sarajevo: A Biography*, University of Michigan Press, 2006, p.165-166.

³⁷ Orhidea Gaura, “Sarajevska saga o ljudskoj dobroti,”



*The Korkut brothers, early 1920s.
(Courtesy of Gazi Husrev Bey Library.)*

Nacional, br. 736, 2009-12-22, <http://arhiva.nacional.hr/clanak/74127/sarajevska-saga-o-ljudskoj-dobroti>.



*Derviš M. Korkut, on the eve of World War Two.
(Courtesy of Gazi Husrev Bey Library.)*



Derviš M. Korkut (center left, wearing a fez) with Bosniak Muslim religious leaders. Above them are the mandatory photographs of the Yugoslav Royal family, required as a sign of loyalty to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. (Courtesy of Travnik Regional Museum.)



Legal scholar Mehmed Begović (first on the right) and Derviš M. Korkut, with two unidentified foreigners in Belgrade in the 1930s. (Courtesy of Gazi Husrev Bey Library.)





Participants at the European Muslim Congress in Geneva, 1935.

Derviş Korkut is in the second row, ninth from left.

(Courtesy of Amr Ryad and the Mohammed Ali van Beetem family archives.)

The Holocaust

On April 6, 1941, the Axis powers attacked Yugoslavia, bombarding all the major towns. By April 17, the Yugoslav army had surrendered, and Yugoslavia was officially under occupation. While Serbia was under Nazi occupation, the Nazi-puppet “Interim Government” led by Serb collaborationist Milan Aćimović was dissolved and replaced by a “Government of National Salvation” led by General Milan Nedić. There were reprisal shootings and camps were set up throughout the country. Jews were killed on the spot, without deportations.³⁸ By 1942, Serbia was the first country after Estonia to be declared “Judenfrei” (free of Jews).³⁹

In Croatia, the Ustasha, a fascist movement led by Ante Pavelić, set up a Nazi-puppet state that they named “The Independent State of Croatia.” The state introduced Nazi-style laws against the Jews and Serbs and set up concentration camps, where they incarcerated and murdered Jews, Serbs and Roma. The most infamous was Jasenovac. The Ustasha had considerable autonomy and were brutal in their genocidal campaign, the aim of which was

³⁸ For more on the Holocaust in Serbia, see: Christopher R. Browning, “Wehrmacht Reprisal Policy and the Mass Murder of Jews in Serbia”, *Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift*, Vol.33, Issue 1.

³⁹ Christopher R. Browning, “Sajmiste as a European Site of Holocaust Remembrance”, *Filozofija i društvo* XXIII (4), 2012, p. 104.

to exterminate those considered racially inferior. An estimated 30,000 Jews, 80% of the country's Jewish population, were killed during the Holocaust by the Ustasha.⁴⁰

Prior to the occupation, the Yugoslav government had introduced several anti-Semitic laws in 1940 that limited Jewish rights in Yugoslavia. One banned wholesale enterprises owned or co-owned by Jews, while another introduced a quota system for Jewish students in schools.⁴¹ Like elsewhere in Europe, anti-Semitism was on the rise in the country.

Some months after the establishment of the Independent State of Croatia, the new government sought to bring the Islamic Community and the religious elites under its control. Bereft of effective political representation, the Bosniak elites tried to retain the last independent body in the country. As neither the Bosniak elites nor their religious leaders were happy with the 1936 Constitution of the Islamic Community, an attempt was launched to draft a new Constitution. First, a commission (*anketna komisija*) was set up in Sarajevo, in 1941, to draft a new Islamic Community constitution. The Bosniak religious leadership took a stand against political or state interference, especially in election of the Reis. There were in all three initiatives for constitutional change; the first in May 1941, the second in February

⁴⁰ Croatia, Shoah Resource Center, *Yad Vashem*, <https://www.yadvashem.org>.

⁴¹ Ivo Goldstein, *The Jews In Yugoslavia 1918–1941: Antisemitism and the Struggle for Equality*, http://web.ceu.hu/jewishstudies/pdf/02_goldstein.pdf, p. 10.

1942, after the death of Reis Spaho, and the third, final attempt was in May 1943.⁴²

Korkut was a member of the commission to draft the new Constitution. Given his experience with previous regimes and their interference in Muslim religious and educational autonomy, Korkut had strong opinions on non-interference. His defiant stance is particular clear from a statement he made on June 2, 1943, in Zagreb, stating that the Constitution and Law on the Islamic Religious Community “should have been drafted to accord with the majority view, without paying too much heed to a few Muslims in Sarajevo and Zagreb and what they think. Some of them even claim a veto over Islamic Community matters, which they have no right to, whether on grounds of common sense, the law, or their own political and moral authority.”⁴³

Korkut was obviously under considerable pressure from Zagreb, as witnessed by the formulation of certain sentences in his statement: “my position here is grounded not just my conscience, but also my honor, so I cannot make concessions in matters I previously advocated in Sarajevo.” He goes on to state his experiences in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes: “My position is grounded in my past and my experience. I have been in a position to see behind the curtain and witness how waqf business has been handled since 1921. I have always been a supporter

⁴² For more on the constitutional attempts see: Nada Kisić Kolanović, *Muslimani i hrvatski nacionalizam 1941.—1945*, Školska knjiga, Hrvatski institut za povijest, Zagreb, 2009, p.302-305.

⁴³ Cited in Kisić Kolanović, p.315.

of waqf autonomy and I held it sacrosanct as department head in the Ministry of Religions from 1921 to 1923.” He ends his statement with a critique of other members of the Commission, who had obviously been manipulated by the government: “The other gentlemen invited took no part in drawing up the Sarajevo or Zagreb drafts....thus they are free, on their firmest convictions, to approve whatever they now prefer, as they had no role in it previously.”⁴⁴

Korkut’s stand was noted around the country. Even the pro-Ustasha newspaper *Osvit* published a short report, stating: “The statement by Muslim author and intellectual Derviš Korkut, given at the commencement of the Commission to draft the constitution and law on the Islamic Religious Community, received the greatest attention, including at the highest level. In his statement, Korkut took a firm stand against all the previous constitutions of the Islamic Religious Community, which allowed party politics to interfere with the Muslim religious organization and so enabled individuals with no religious or personal qualifications whatsoever to interfere in the exclusively religious affairs of Muslims. Korkut thus insisted that the drafting and implementation of a new constitution for the Islamic Community be entrusted first and foremost to the Muslim clergy and experts in shariah law and economics, who, as the best experts in these matters, will find the path that best matches the needs of Croatian Muslims.”⁴⁵

⁴⁴ AIZBIH, Fondu rasutih dokumenata i arhivalija, Izjava M. Derviša ef. Korkuta na 8. sjednici uže ankete u Zagrebu (2.VI.1943).

⁴⁵ “Pabirci”, *Osvit*, p.2, no. 80, 1943.

By July 1941, the Ustasha had already started making lists of Roma and dispatching them to the camps. As Emily Greble has pointed out, the Bosniak religious leadership realized that “Sarajevo’s Muslims recognized that the racial classification of Roma had broader implications for Muslims in Croatia. In a state where racial status determined one’s right to live, Muslims were justifiably wary of any ideology that defined a portion of their religious community as an inferior group. They realized that if the new rulers could label some Muslims non-Aryan, nothing prevented them from reclassifying other Muslims in the future.”⁴⁶ The Bosniak elite’s protests were too serious for the government to ignore. The Ministry of the Interior quickly set up a four-man commission to provide an expert opinion on the Roma issue. The Commission members were Dr. Šaćir Sikirić, head of the Higher Islamic Theological School, Hamdija Kreševljaković, a member of the Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences, Derviš M. Korkut, custodian at the National Museum, and Mehmed Handžić, Director of the Gazi Husrev-bey Library. They wrote a policy report for the Ministry of Interior, proving academically that Roma were in fact of Aryan race and Muslims who should not be targeted. They cited Leopold Glück (1854-1907), a Polish Jewish doctor and anthropologist who had conducted research on the Roma population in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Emily Greble, *Sarajevo 1941-1945: Muslims, Christians and Jews in Hitler’s Europe*, Cornell University Press, 2011, p. 92.

⁴⁷ Aiša Softić, “Prilozi o Romima u Bosni i Hercegovini od kraja 19. do kraja 20. Stoljeća”, *Radovi Filozofskog fakulteta u Sarajevu (Historija, Historija umjetnosti, Arheologija)*, No 6 (2019), p. 175.

The Commission concluded on this basis that there were two types of Gypsies in Bosnia, the so-called black (*Čergaši*) and white Gypsies (*Gurbeti*), and that “According to the scientific evidence, both of the aforementioned branches of Gypsies are considered to be Aryans belonging to the Indo-European/Indo-Germanic races.”⁴⁸ In this way, the Commission sought to protect the Roma from racial persecution by proving that they were Aryans.⁴⁹

On October 17, 1941, a Bosnian Jewish intellectual and book-shop owner, Dr Vita Kajon, gave Korkut some Jewish manuscripts for safe-keeping.⁵⁰ He was deported to Jasenovac just a few days later. Korkut, who knew the manuscripts might be stolen or destroyed intentionally, recorded them in an archival register entitled “Archiv der Familie Kapetanović - Türkische Urkunden” (The Archives of the Kapetanović Family - Turkish manuscripts). In this way, Korkut rescued a number of important Jewish manuscripts.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Greble, p. 92.

⁴⁹ For more on Roma in the Independent State of Croatia see: Narcisa Lengel-Krizman, *Genocid nad Romima-Jasenovac 1942*, Javna ustanova Spomen-područje Jasenovac, Jasenovac-Zagreb 2003.

⁵⁰ The relationship between the Korkuts and the Kajons continued over several decades. An example of it is the fact that the Yugoslav Muslim National Organization (JMNO)'s newspaper *Iršad* was edited by the Korkut brothers and printed by the Kajon printing house.

⁵¹ Kemal Bakaršić, “Manuscript Codex C-4436 of the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina a.k.a. The Sarajevo Haggadah”, published in K. Bakaršić, *Fragmentsi kulturne historije Bosne i Hercegovine*, Editio Civitas, Sarajevo, 2005, p. 121.

The Haggadah

The Sarajevo Haggadah is a major cultural treasure of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Haggadah is a Jewish text used during the Passover Seder. After the *Reconquista* and the expulsion of Muslims and Jews from Spain in the 15th century, many Sephardic Jews settled in the Ottoman Empire, including in Sarajevo. They brought with them a 14th century illuminated manuscript of the text. This manuscript was purchased from the Cohen family by the National Museum in Sarajevo in 1894.

In early 1942, the Nazi General Johann Hans Fortner, commander of the 718th division, visited the Museum and demanded the Haggadah be handed over to him. Although different stories exist, none of which can be confirmed, what is certain is that Korkut brought the Haggadah to his own home and later gave it for safekeeping to a trustworthy *imam* in a mountain village mosque who protected it until it was safe.⁵²

Unfortunately, the Haggadah rescue story is based on oral history alone, as there is no written testimony or memoir by Korkut. His wife, Servet, gave several accounts, in which she stated:

That morning, he was in the Museum with the director, Jozo Petrović, when the Germans

⁵² Two versions exist, involving either the village mosques at Umoljani or Turovi on Mt. Bjelašnica or a village mosque on Mt. Vlašić.

called to say they were coming to the Museum. Jozo conveyed this to my husband. Derviš did not even take the time to think. He just told them to give him the keys to the safe, as the Haggadah had to be saved. Jozo told him he was not himself. But he stuck to his plan, telling them, “let them kill me, just give me the Haggadah.”⁵³

Korkut was the chief librarian and *kustos* or custodian of the Museum and as such felt a moral and ethical obligation to protect its holdings, especially the Haggadah, with his life, if necessary. Korkut and Petrović rushed down to the basement and Korkut took the Haggadah from the safe. Petrović “took the book from its protective box and handed it to Korkut. Korkut lifted his coat and tucked the small codex, which measures about six by nine inches, into the waistband of his trousers. He smoothed his jacket, making sure no bulges broke the line of his suit, and the two men made their way back upstairs to face the General.”⁵⁴

General Fortner demanded the Haggadah. Petrović replied and Korkut translated that the Haggadah had been given to a Nazi officer who had arrived earlier. When the General asked for the officer’s name,

⁵³ Elma Duvnjak, “Hagada knjiga sa sudbinom avanturiste”, *Nezavisne novine*, 16.5.2009, <https://www.nezavisne.com/novosti/drustvo/Hagada-knjiga-sa-sudbinom-avanturiste/40875>

⁵⁴ Geraldine Brooks, “The Book of Exodus”, *The New Yorker*, November 25, 2007, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/12/03/the-book-of-exodus>

Petrović replied: “Sir, I did not think it my place to require a name.”⁵⁵

Servet remembers that Korkut told the friend he entrusted with the Haggadah: “Please, take care of the Haggadah, because it is something that I would give my life for! And, if anything happens to me, when the war ends, wait for the situation to calm down a bit, and when you’re sure nobody is going to arrest you, and then bring it.”⁵⁶

His friend replied: “Don’t worry. You’ll get it back.”

Research by Prof. Ljubinka Bašović has shed some light on Korkut’s other rescue efforts:

A Commission inspection (April 11 and 15, 1945) showed that the call slips for the Haggadah codex and King Tvrtko’s Charter were with curator Korkut, who had removed them to a safe place outside the Museum building. Korkut kept the keys of the Museum Library and of the Institute for Balkan Studies, as well as the keys to the basement, where the library’s inventory books, rare books and incunabula collection had been removed to, along with the most valuable collections from the Institute for Balkan Studies and the archives of the Museum.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Orhidea Gaura, “Sarajevska saga o ljudskoj dobroti,” *Nacional*, no. 736, 2009-12-22, <http://arhiva.nacional.hr/clanak/74127/sarajevska-saga-o-ljudskoj-dobroti>.

⁵⁷ Ljubinka Bašović, “Djelatnost naučne biblioteke Zemaljskog muzeja 1888-1988. godine” in Vljako Palavestra, *Spoimenica stogodišnjica rada Zemaljskog muzeja Bosne i Hercegovine 1888-1988*. Sarajevo: Zemaljski muzej, Sarajevo,

Soon after Korkut rescued the Haggadah, a friend approached him and asked if he could help a young Jewish girl - Donkica Papo (later Mira Baković). Mira's parents had already been sent to an Ustasha camp. In late March 1942, after spending some time in the woods around Sarajevo with Partisan units, she had to leave her unit.⁵⁸ The Partisan commissioner informed them that thirty young Partisans (*omladinci*), all of them Jews from Sarajevo, would not be able to continue with them since the newly formed units needed to be "fast-moving".⁵⁹ Tired and with nowhere to turn, she sought out a colleague of her father's, who then contacted Korkut.

Korkut quickly decided to help Donkica. He brought her back to his house and told his wife the girl needed protection. Servet gave her Muslim clothing and said they would present her as a cousin from Kosovo who had come to help out, as Servet had just given birth to a son, Munib. After several months, Korkut managed to get her forged documents and to connect her with family members in the southern part of the country. She successfully managed to cross over and rejoined the Partisans remaining with them until the end of the war.

Around the time Korkut was hiding Donkica, the Committee for National Salvation (*Odbor narodnog*

1988, pp.366-384. Cited in K. Bakaršić, "Manuscript Codex C-4436.....", p. 115.

⁵⁸ According to Mira Baković, in March 1942, Serb Royalist Forces, known as Chetniks, who were fighting alongside the Partisans, switched sides and allied with the German Nazis against the Partisans.

⁵⁹ YVA, Dervis & Servet Korkut File, No. 6323, *Veoma cenjenoj Ustanovi Jad-Vasem Jerusalem*, 20.2.1994, p.1.

spasa) was being formed in Sarajevo. After genocidal massacres throughout eastern Bosnia, thousands of Bosniak Muslim refugees flooded the streets of Sarajevo. Refugees were on the streets without any institutional support. Given the total lack of Bosniak political leadership, a number of survivors from the eastern Bosnian town of Foča met with the Bosniak elites in Sarajevo and pleaded with them to help stop the massacres and provide food and shelter to the refugees. On August 26, 1942, the Committee was formed as an “umbrella organisation grouping representatives of the various Muslim societies and associations in Bosnia and Herzegovina.”⁶⁰ It was chaired by Safet Bašić, acting deputy Grand Mufti, (*naib reis-ul-uleme*), and attended by around 300 Bosniak notables. The Committee called for an end to atrocities against Bosniaks, “to appeal over the head of the NDH to the Germans, the Italians, the Allies and the Islamic world” and in favour of “joint cooperation of the entire population of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the complete unity of Muslims, Orthodox and Catholics.”⁶¹ A 48-member committee was named, bringing together members of the Bosniak academic, political, economic elites, including Korkut.⁶²

There is not much information on Korkut’s work in the Committee, but it has been suggested that

⁶⁰ Marko Attila Hoare, *The Bosnian Muslims in the Second World War: A History*, Oxford University Press, p. 51

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² The Committee secretary Mahmut Traljić mentions Korkut in his interview. Mahmut Traljić, *Odbor narodnog spasa, istina i proces 1947. Dokumenti*, Centar za bosansko-muslimanske studije, Kulturno društvo muslimana (KDM) Preporod, 1991.

the Committee used his linguistic capabilities in its communication with foreign government contacts. The Committee also gathered reports and eye-witness accounts from survivors and refugees, translated them and sent reports to foreign governments, most notably in Egypt and Turkey, seeking their help.

After the capitulation of Italy in September 1943, the Museum director Jozo Petrović was replaced by Vejsil Čurčić. Čurčić was close to the Ustasha authorities and immediately set out to root out all insubordination in the Museum. His first step was to remove Korkut from the library and replace him with a loyalist. The person he had in mind was Vjekoslav Zadrović.

On February 14, 1944, Zadrović wrote a letter to Čurčić explaining the details of taking over the library and stating his readiness to do so in April.⁶³ Zadrović was appointed to the post of director of the First Male Gymnasium in Sarajevo, however, and so did not start working at the Museum. Čurčić then decided to name Don Mate Klarić, the Museum's secretary, as head of the library. On March 30, 1944, Čurčić sent an official letter to Korkut informing him of the decision and named him head of the Balkan Institute. Korkut initialed his copy of the decision and, interestingly, later added an additional handwritten note to the letter, dated February 5, 1946:

NB: Since I was completely convinced that Don Mate Klarić would not be staying as librarian once Sarajevo had been liberated, I

⁶³ ABIH, Zemaljski Muzej Sarajeva, Zadrović to Čurčić, 14 February 1944.

only initialed the handover, and so only handed over the content of two drawers in the counter. He made a record of the handover which I did not sign. He took the keys for the drawers and took them with him, a few days before Sarajevo was liberated.⁶⁴

Čurčić's animosity towards Korkut continued over the weeks that followed and is best illustrated by a letter sent on April 5, 1944, by Čurčić to the State Prosecutor's office in Sarajevo, in which Čurčić notified them that Korkut had delivered an article to the *Herald of the National Museum* in French and asked whether it should be censored.⁶⁵

A few days later, on April 8, 1944, Čurčić wrote to the Ministry of Education asking them to rule on the writing of articles for the Museum's *Herald* in foreign languages.⁶⁶

On April 18, 1944, Čurčić issued a work order for Korkut to hand over the library to Klarić "en bloc."⁶⁷ Korkut responded at once, refusing to hand over the library, stating that he had received custody of the library in peacetime "item by item", following the inventory, while any "en bloc" handover would be an

⁶⁴ ABIH, Zemaljski Muzej Sarajeva, Mijenjanje programa muzejskog rada, No. 312/44, 30 March 1944.

⁶⁵ ABIH, Zemaljski Muzej Sarajeva, Cenzura rada Derviša M. Korkuta, kustosa Hrvatskog drž. Muzeja. No. Taj.8/44, 5 April 1944.

⁶⁶ ABIH, Zemaljski Muzej Sarajeva, Pisanje stručnih članaka u sarajevskom "Glasniku Hrvatskog državnog muzeja" u stranim jezicima – odobrenje, No. Taj. 9/44, 8 April 1944.

⁶⁷ ABiH, Zemaljski Muzej Sarajeva, Preuzimanje knjižnice, No. 377/44, 18 April 1944.

attempt to blame Korkut for any missing books. Korkut also wrote that the inspiration for that form of handover had come from former Museum Secretary Rudolf Zaplata,⁶⁸ whose “spirit” still ruled the Museum. He added that, during Zaplata’s time, “custodians who would not or could not subordinate themselves to the authorities, lower-ranking Museum workers, had caused trouble and inconvenience and played tricks.” He also said he was not in a position to conduct a handover for “quite formal reasons”, as the letter had arrived already opened, was addressed to two persons, and there was no delivery book, all of which was “unacceptable in confidential and personnel matters.”⁶⁹

It was most probably as a result of these activities defying and resisting the Nazi and Ustasha regimes that Korkut received an order to report for duty at the National Library in Zagreb. This order no. 63325/44, dated October 6, 1944, was signed personally by the Ustasha leader Ante Pavelić. The day he received the order, October 6, 1944, Korkut requested sick leave.⁷⁰

On October 26, 1944, Čurčić sent a letter to the Ministry of Finance informing them that Korkut’s employment had been terminated and that he was no longer entitled to a salary.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Rudolf Zaplata was the Museum’s secretary from 1937 to 1941. He died in 1942. For more see: Amir Brka, *Rudolf Zaplata: Bibliografija*, Centar za kulturu i obrazovanje Tešanj, Tešanj: 2000.

⁶⁹ ABiH, Zemaljski Muzej Sarajeva, Preuzimanje knjižice, No.377/44, 18 April 1944, Reply written by hand.

⁷⁰ Alija Bejtić, p. 30

⁷¹ ABiH, Zemaljski Muzej Sarajeva, Obustava beriva. No: 1057/44, 26 October 1944.

Two days later, on October 28, 1944, Korkut sent a letter to Čurčić in which he sharply criticized him, stating: "You are hoping for a repeat of the case when the former head Mr. B. Murgić 'arranged' for a Ministry decision to be brought in by plane, so that you can take over the running of the Museum. The gentleman in question flew from his position at airplane speed, however, and that practice does not bear repeating, however much you and your subordinate prompter would like that." Korkut added that he wanted to complete his handover in an orderly and legally accountable way, noting that "wherever I have served to date, I have left everything tidy and in good order, so that even my enemies had nothing to reprimand me with." Korkut ended his letter to Čurčić by stating that he was well-informed "about the intrigues and tricks" planned and carried out by certain individuals at the Ministry of Education, so that he had "cancelled the handover" of the library to Don Klarić when news of his transfer to Zagreb was proclaimed prematurely. "I have never cared a fig for their 'orders' or decisions, nor will I ever pay them any heed, but decisions of the Ministry of Education I will execute in accordance with the regulations and in the only possible common way."⁷²

On November 6, 1944, Korkut wrote to the Museum, asking them to inform Zagreb that he could not travel because the railway lines had been cut.⁷³

⁷² ABiH, Zemaljski Muzej Sarajeva, Letter from Korkut to Čurčić, 28 October 1944.

⁷³ ABiH, Zemaljski Muzej Sarajeva, Upraviteljstvu Hrvatskog državnog muzeja u Sarajevu, 6 November 1944.

Two days later, on November 8, 1944, Korkut wrote to Čurčić again. Just as sharply as in his previous letters, he stated that Čurčić's civil service employment had already been ended twice under the law – first when he retired in 1926 and a second time when he had turned seventy.⁷⁴ Korkut ended his letter by stating, “The keys, a few of which are in my possession, while the rest are locked up safe in the Museum somewhere no one but me is likely to find them, shall, once I recover, be handed over to the appropriate individual appointed by the Ministry of Education or the most senior representative of the administrative government in Sarajevo.”⁷⁵ A decision to seal the library was made on November 11, but the committee sent out that day to implement it were unable to find the keys.⁷⁶

On November 30, 1944, Čurčić wrote a letter to the Ministry about Korkut, in which he stated that “it was high time to remove from this position a person who embodies, i.e. personifies, Oriental laziness.”⁷⁷ Čurčić also expressed his suspicion of Korkut's intentions: “This reluctance of his to hand over the library ‘*en bloc*’ is just an attempt to prolong the transfer, because he hopes the war will end soon and

⁷⁴ ABiH, Zemaljski Muzej Sarajeva, Upraviteljstvu Hrvatskog državnog muzeja u Sarajevu, No.1089/44 7 November 1944.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ ABiH, Zemaljski Muzej Sarajeva, Pečačenje knjižnice Hrvatskog državnog muzeja i Balkanskog instituta, No. 1089/44, 11 November 1944 and Zapisnik, 11 November 1944.

⁷⁷ ABiH, Zemaljski Muzej Sarajeva, Derviš Korkut, kustos – primopredaja knjižnice Hrvatskog državnog muzeja, No. 19/44, 30 November 1944.

his Belgrade friends will take the helm again, so that he or his friend Dr Jozo Petrović, will soon be sitting in the director's chair and can resume their orgy."⁷⁸

During these last days of the occupation in Sarajevo, Sarajevo Police Chief Emil Tuk ordered that Korkut be escorted to Zagreb. Korkut suspected he was to be sent to the Jasenovac concentration camp,⁷⁹ so he and his family went into hiding and managed to survive until Sarajevo was liberated by the Partisan forces on April 6, 1945.

Soon after the liberation of Sarajevo, the Communist government appointed a new Museum administration. Bosnia and Herzegovina became officially the People's Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, one of the six republics constitutive of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia.

On September 14, 1945, with the new Communist government in power, Korkut handed over the entire library to a new custodian.⁸⁰

In early 1947, the newly appointed director, Vojin Gligić, wrote to the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding the status of the Museum's employees. Of Korkut he said that he did not "suit the position" and should be retired.⁸¹ An official recommendation of retirement came on February 12, 1947, from the Ministry

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Naši Merhumi: Derviš M. Korkut, *Glasnik* 1969, p.542.

⁸⁰ ABiH, Zemaljski Muzej Sarajeva, Zapisnik o primopredaji Biblioteke Zemaljskog muzeja u Sarajevu, 14 September 1945.

⁸¹ ABiH, Zemaljski Muzej Sarajeva, Ministarstvu prosvjete Narodne republike BiH – Personalnom otdjelu, Undated, 1947.



General Johan Hans Fortner

of Education.⁸² A determination was made on Korkut's retirement on April 1, 1947, by the Ministry of Education. Even after this ruling, however, Korkut continued to work at the Museum.⁸³

⁸² ABiH, Zemaljski Muzej Sarajeva, Korkut Derviš, rukovodilac biblioteke u Državnom muzeju – prijedlog za penzionisanje, No.1334/47, 12 February 1947.

⁸³ It is unclear why the decision was not enforced.

NDH 1742

NEZAVISNA DRŽAVA HRVATSKA
POVJERENISTVO SARAJEVO

Broj: 2377/41. PRG.
30. srpnja 1941. g.
-Sarajevo-

Predmet: Pitanje cigana.-

Ministarstvu unutarnjih poslova
Zagreb

Prilikom sasijedanja anketnog odbora za izradu zakona islamsko vjerske-povjerske autonomije u našoj državi, dotaknuto je i pitanje rasne pripadnosti Cigana islamske vjere u Bosni i Hercegovini. Nakon opširne rasprave o tome pitanju, povjerenje je Dru Šefiru Sikiriću, rektoru Više islamsko-teološke škole, Hamdiji Kreševijakoviću, članu Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti, Dervišu M. Korkutu, kustosu Zem. muzeja i Hadži Mehmed ef. Handžiću, upravitelju Gasi Husret-begove knjižnice, da ovu stvar ispituju, i da potpisanoome podnesu o tome izvješće.

Spomenuti su tu stvar proučili prema raznim izvorima, a napose prema knjizi "Zur physischen Anthropologie der Ziganen in B. und der H." od Dra Leopolda Glucka, koja je izašla u Beču 1897. god. kao poseban otičak iz "Wissenschaftliche Mittheilungen aus B.u.P.H.". Tim je istraživanjem ustanovljeno ovo:

Cigani Bosne i Hercegovine, koji su islamske vjere, dijele se na dvoje, i to, bijele Cigane i crne Cigane, t. sv. Čergaše. Bijeli su Cigani po svojoj prilici ciganskog porijekla, ali su se miješanjem s domaćim pučanstvom potpuno asimilirali i pohrvatili, te su već davno zaboravili svoj nekadašnji ciganski jezik. Oni žive u većim gradovima, protežno se bave izvjesnim zanatima, naročito kovačkim, a gdje su i trgovinom, žive u obiteljima potpuno jednako kao i ostali muslimani ovih krajeva, te se od njih vrlo teško ili nikako ne razlikuju. Među ovu vrstu Cigana uređunavaju gdje su t. sv. bolji t. j. bogatiji muslimanski slojevi i one prave Hrvate muslimane, koji su potpuno osiromašili, pa se zbog toga bave najprostijim privrednim poslovima.

Crni Cigani, t. sv. Čergaši ili gurbeti, žive redovno kao nomadi i smatraju se pravim Ciganima. Oni i danas među se govore svojim posebnim jezikom, premda svi dobro znaju i hrvatski. Bave se trgovinom konja te kotarskim, kalaždžijskim i kovačkim zanatima.

Obje spomenute grane Cigana, prava naučnim istraživanjima, pripadaju arijskoj, odnosno indoeuropskoj / indogermskoj/ rasi, a potječu iz sjeverozapadne Indije.

Za lakše i temeljito proučavanje toga pitanja šaljem van u

./.

Details of the Committee on the Roma's findings. Korkut was member of the Committee, which helped protect Roma in the Independent State of Croatia.

NEZAVISNA DRŽAVA HRVATSKA - MINISTARSTVO NARODNE PROSVJETE - ZAGREB
 Odjel za visoku nastavu

Broj: 63325 - 1944.

Na temelju § 55. st. 2. zakona o činovnicima od 31. ožujka 1944., te § 21. zakonske odredbe od 27. studenoga 1941. broj CDXXXVII-2115-2-1941.

o d r e đ u j e m,

da se Derviš K o r k u t, kustos Hrvatskog državnog muzeja u Sarajevu, VI. činovnog razreda 2. plaćevnog stupnja, imenuje knjižničarom Hrvatske narodne i sveučilišne knjižnice u Zagrebu, činovnikom VI. činovnog razreda 2. plaćevnog stupnja.

Izdatak za ovo imenovanje pada na račun naslova CLVIII, stupac 2046, podstupca 1 državnog proračuna za 1944. godinu.

U Zagrebu, dne 6. listopada 1944.

POGLAVNIK
 NEZAVISNE DRŽAVE HRVATSKE
 Ante Pavelić v.r.

U smislu § 8. zakonske odredbe o proračunu Nezavisne Države Hrvatske za 1944. potvrđuje se, da za ovo imenovanje postoji slobodno proračunsko mjesto i slobodna navjera u naslovu CLVIII stupec 2046 i podstupac 1 proračuna za 1944. god.

U Zagrebu, dne 11. X. 1944.

Nadstojnik:
 Lachmann v.r.

Predmet: Korkut Derviš, kustos Hrvatskog državnog muzeja u Sarajevu, preimenovanje.


HRVATSKOM DRŽAVNOM MUZEJU U SARAJEVU.

Izvolite uručiti imenovanca priloženu odluku, te ga u zakonskom roku razriješiti dužnosti kod toga muzeja i uputiti Hrvatskoj narodnoj i sveučilišnoj knjižnici u Zagrebu.

U Zagrebu, dne 6. listopada 1944.

Za Dom Spremani !

Odjelni pročelnik:
 Prof. Pavo Tijan



11

Order signed by Ustasha leader Ante Pavelić ordering Korkut's transfer to Zagreb. It was sent to the National Museum in Sarajevo by Pavo Tijan, Head of the Department of Higher Education and Academic institutions in the Independent State of Croatia. (Courtesy of Archives of Bosnia and Herzegovina.)

Arrest and Trial

In a matter of weeks, the Bosniak Muslim traditional elites in the new Yugoslavia found themselves under arrest. The new regime was keen to eliminate opposition in all walks of life. This included many who were anti-Ustasha and anti-Nazi. Anyone who voiced concern or criticized any decision of the authorities was imprisoned. Korkut was arrested and put in prison on June 7, 1947. Later, in 1948, during the Tito-Stalin split, such repression would be applied to many Communists as well. The purges were draconian. Korkut was tried as part of a group of Bosniak intellectuals in a show trial known as “Dobrača and others” (*Dobrača i drugi*). In the post-World War Two regimes, the best way to get rid of somebody was to proclaim him a collaborator:

All his friends and his brother told him to keep quiet, but he couldn't stand that the people in power had no appreciation for cultural heritage. One night, at one o'clock in the morning, they came in and made a search. First, they went into our neighbour, Dr Turković. The children were crying, and Derviš said, “Don't be afraid, Servet.” They took him away. Derviš searched for witnesses to prove he had not been a German collaborator, but had, on the contrary, done everything in his power to thwart their plans.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Orhidea Gaura, “Sarajevska saga o ljudskoj dobroti”, *Nacional*,

When Servet saw Mira on the street one day, she was happy to see her and that she had survived the war. She called out her name, but Mira looked the other way. Mira was a Partisan now and married to a Partisan officer. She could not afford to be seen fraternizing with someone whose husband was an enemy of the state. Mira had been threatened that her two children would be taken away and she would end up “on the street.”⁸⁵ Times had changed. Servet saw her one more time but had no desire to approach her: “I did not want to impose myself.” A few years later, Mira’s husband died and she left Sarajevo, eventually emigrating to Israel.

Before the trial had even started, Servet Korkut was called to the Museum and given a paper to sign – a decision by the Ministry of Education cutting her husband’s benefits in half in advance of the verdict.⁸⁶

Korkut was found guilty of collaboration with “Fascist Germany” and working against the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia. He was accused, along with other Bosniak intellectuals, of conspiring against the new state by holding meetings within an “illegal organization” and, more specifically, of meeting with the English consul in autumn 1946, whom he had asked that “Great Britain promise Yugoslavia in the Peace Treaty that it will impose obligations that contravene the Yugoslav Constitution.”⁸⁷

br.736,2009-12-22,<http://arhiva.nacional.hr/clanak/74127/sarajevska-saga-o-ljudskoj-dobroti>

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ ABiH, Zemaljski Muzej Sarajeva, Decision no. 4295/47 dated 30.6.1947, document 966/47.

⁸⁷ AKPD Zenica, Okružni sud u Sarajevu, Presuda, br. K-529/47-11, p. 4

The Sarajevo-based *Oslobođenje* newspaper launched a campaign against the group on trial, publishing sensationalist reports on a daily basis.⁸⁸ It was clear that this was a political trial with the aim of dismissing Korkut and the others from public life.

Korkut was sentenced to eight years in prison, the confiscation of all his property, deprivation of his political rights, and loss of his right to a pension and social security for the next three years.⁸⁹ In ruling number KŽ-1648/47, the Supreme Court of the People's Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Vrhovni sud Narodne Republike Bosne i Hercegovine*) turned down their appeal.⁹⁰ The last sentence of the verdict states "reasons are omitted as unnecessary."

Korkut was imprisoned in the infamous Zenica prison, which was where all political prisoners and collaborators were held. Hard labour was a key aspect of "rehabilitation." When he was brought there, he had two coats, two pairs of trousers, a towel and his identity card.⁹¹ Servet was allowed to visit him once a week, but only for five minutes.

His medical file shows that he became very weak and ill during his stay in prison. He suffered from general weakness, as well as more specific fatigue in his heart muscles, bronchitis and other health issues.⁹²

⁸⁸ For more on the reporting by *Oslobođenje* see: Hikmet Karčić, "Kako je Oslobođenje izvještavalo o suđenju Kasim ef. Dobračić i drugima", *Novi Muallim*, No.70, 2017, 87-92

⁸⁹ AKPD Zenica, Okružni sud u Sarajevu, Presuda, br. K-529/47-11, p. 7

⁹⁰ Vrhovni sud Narodne Republike Bosne i Hercegovine, Presuda, br. KŽ-1648/47 dated 13th November 1947.

⁹¹ AKPD Zenica, Spisak predmeta, MB 1643/B.

⁹² AKPD Zenica, Zdravstveni list br. 305.



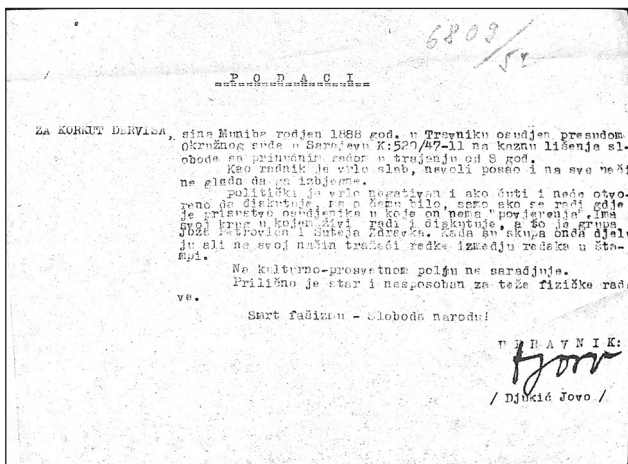
Optuženi Dobrača, Korkut, d-r Turković i d-r Tanović pred sudom

Korkut (second from left), with other defendants in court, 1947, published in Oslobođenje newspaper.

In his prison dossier, his nationality was given as “*neopredjeljen*” (undeclared). In this new Yugoslavia, Bosnian Muslims were not recognized as a separate nationality.

The prison warden, Jovo Đukić, wrote a short report on Korkut, stating:

He is a very poor worker. He does not like to work and seeks to evade it in every way. Politically, he is very negative and quiet and loath to discuss anything, except in the company of convicts he “trusts.” He has his own circle, in which he lives, works and discusses. That is the group of Jozo Petrović and Šutej Zdravko. When they are together, they are proactive, but in their own way, splitting hairs while reading printed text. He does not cooperate in cultural



A report from Zenica prison on Korkut's activities and behavior.

and educational work. He is quite old and incapable of heavy physical work.⁹³

On November 18, 1952, Ivan Ribar, Chairman of the Presidium of the National Assembly, granted him a partial pardon and reduced his sentence from 8 to 6 years.⁹⁴ He was released on June 7, 1953.⁹⁵

⁹³ AKPD Zenica, Podaci, no. 6809/52. Jozo Petrović was former director of the Museum with whom Korkut had worked. Petrović was sentenced by the new regime for collaboration with the enemy. Zdravko Šutej was a pre-war lawyer based in Sarajevo.

⁹⁴ AKPD Zenica, Prezidijum Narodne skupštine FNRJ, Odluka br. 7619, 18. novembar 1952.

⁹⁵ AKPD Zenica, Uprava Kazneno popravnog doma Zenica, Br. 6236/53, 7. juna 1953.

OKRUŽNI SUD U SARAJEVU
K-529/47-11

P R E S U D A
U I M E N A R O D A I

Okružni sud u Sarajevu u vijeću sastavljenom od pretorskih sudija Salčića Ahmeda kao pretsjednika vijeća i sudije porotnika Mahmeta Hadžomerovića i Hasana Bračkovića, te Vjekoslave Istvančića kao zapisničara u krivičnom predmetu protiv Kasima Dobraca i dr. u krivičnog djela iz čl. 2 i 3 Zakona o krivičnim djelima protiv naroda i države, na glavnom pretresu održanom riješenjem od 8-IX-1947 g. K-528/47 i održanom dne 18 do 25 septembra 1947 g. u prisutnosti Javnog tužioca N.R. Bosne i Hercegovine, branitelja Dr. Uroša Ivaniševića, Mahmeta Filipovića, Dr. Ilije Badovinca, Nadije Armutović, Dr. Ante Merkadžića, Ante Jurjevića, Dr. Vase Runde i Dr. Dimitrija Miloševića, advokata iz Sarajeva i optuženih, koji su predložili iz istražnog zatvora, nakon provedenog dokaznog postupka po saslušavanju predloga optužbe i odbrane, donio je i javno proglasio sljedeću

P R E S U D U :

I - optuženi KASIM DOBRACA, vjeroučitelj i nastavnik Gazi Husrefbegove medrese u Sarajevu, rođen u selu Vragolovima srez Rogatica 15. aprila 1890 g. od oca um. Hašida i majke Hasnije rođene Vručkak, neoženjen, nepredjeljen, državljanin FNRJ, vojsku služio, neosudjivan, u istražnom zatvoru od 24. maja 1947 g.

II - optuženi DERVIS KORKUT, kustos muzeja u Sarajevu, rođen u Travniku 1888 godine, od oca um. Muhlibe i majke Sahide rođ. Bišević, oženjen, otac dvoje djece, svršio teološka fakultet, nepredjeljen, državljanin FNRJ, neosudjivan, u istražnom zatvoru od 7. VI. 1947 g.

III - optuženi DR KASIM TURKOVIC, činovnik iz Sarajeva, rođen 18. XI. 1901 g. od oca Muhameda i majke um. Almasa rođ. Mjencević, oženjen, otac troje djece, svršio Hrvst, državljanin FNRJ, ima svršio pravnici fakultet, neosudjivan, u istražnom zatvoru od 17. VI. 1947 g.

IV - optuženi Dr. JUSUF TANOVIC, advokat iz Sarajeva, rođen u Gacku 15. II. 1893 g. od oca um. Bećira i majke Naze rođ. Zvizdić, oženjen, otac troje djece, po narodnosti Jugoslaven, državljanin FNRJ, vojsku služio, neosudjivan, u istražnom zatvoru od 24. VI. 1947 g. do VIII. 1947 g.

V - optuženi ABDULAH DERVIŠEVIĆ nastavnik Medrese iz Sarajeva rođen u Sarajevu 1909 g. od oca Mustafe i majke Uzejfe rođ. Handžić, neoženjen, nepredjeljen, državljanin FNRJ, vojsku služio, neosudjivan, u istražnom zatvoru od 24. V. 1947 g.

VI - optuženi MAHMUT TRALJIĆ vjeroučitelj iz Sarajeva (bibliotekar Gazi Husrefbegove medrese), rođen 28. IV. 1918 g. od oca Muhameda i majke um. Senije rođene Hafizović, po narodnosti nepredjeljen, neosudjivan, u istražnom zatvoru od 2. VI. 1947 g.

VII - optuženi MUSTAFA HEBOVIC, trgovac iz Sarajeva, rođen u Titovgradu 25. III. 1918 g. od oca Sulje i majke Fate rođ. Ibić, nepredjeljen, po narodnosti nepredjeljen, državljanin FNRJ, vjere Islamske, otac jednog djeteta, ima 3 razreda trgovačke škole, neosudjivan, u istražnom zatvoru od 20. V. 1947 g.

VIII - optuženi IBRAHIM KARALIĆ, vjeroučitelj iz Doboj, rođen u Grabskoj srez Doboj, 23. III. 1909 g. od Omera i Azemine rođ. Mustafić, oženjen, otac troje djece, nepredjeljen, državljanin FNRJ, ima 8 razreda Gazi Husrefbegove medrese, neosudjivan, u istražnom zatvoru od 28. XII. 1946 g.

IX - optuženi HASAN AVDIĆ imam iz Magleja, rođen u Sarajevu 1915 g. od oca Mustafe i majke Azemine rođ. Mustafić, nepredjeljen, po narodnosti nepredjeljen, državljanin FNRJ, ima 5 razreda medrese, neosudjivan, u istražnom zatvoru od 21. XII. 1946 g.

X - optuženi HASAN LJEVAKOVIĆ vjeroučitelj iz Moševca srez Magleja, rođen u Moševcu 1913 g. od Mehmeda i Ajke rođ. Abdurahmanović, oženjen otac 4 djece, nepredjeljen, državljanin FNRJ, neosudjivan.

The first page of the Sarajevo District Court verdict of September 1947. Korkut was a co-defendant.

During Korkut's incarceration, Servet and her two children had moved in with her family in Mitrovica, in Kosovo, because their property had been confiscated by the state and they themselves labelled enemies of the state. During their stay in Mitrovica, their daughter Abida died of meningitis.

Sarajevo City Museum

Shortly after his release from prison, on July 8, 1953, Korkut was taken on at the Sarajevo City Museum (*Muzej grada Sarajeva*). He was 65 years old and worked as curator, identifying and translating oriental inscriptions at the Museum. In 1955, his daughter Lamija was born.

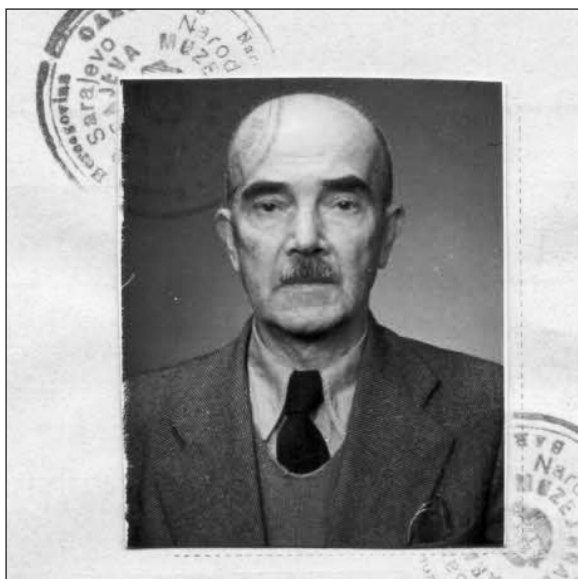
His personnel file from 1960 states that he “handled the oriental collection and collected and inventoried objects and instruments. He carried out the duties of interpreter in the exhibition halls, providing explanations to visitors in foreign languages. He worked on gathering materials and preparing an edited volume.”⁹⁶

Among the other documents in the file, there is a statement dated December 1, 1960, and made by Korkut in front of the Museum director, Ahmed Grebo, that reads: “I hereby state that in my work I will adhere to the Constitution and the law, perform my official duties conscientiously, and endeavor to contribute to the realization of the principles and promotion of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia.”⁹⁷

Another interesting note in his file is the section on previous workplaces, which states that he had begun working at the National Museum in Sarajevo on

⁹⁶ MGS, Personalni dosije Derviša Korkuta, Upitnik za ocjenjivanje službenika naučnih ustanova odnosno ustanova u oblasti kulture, No. 01-12/60.

⁹⁷ MGS, Personalni dosije Derviša Korkuta, Zapisnik, 1 decembar 1960.



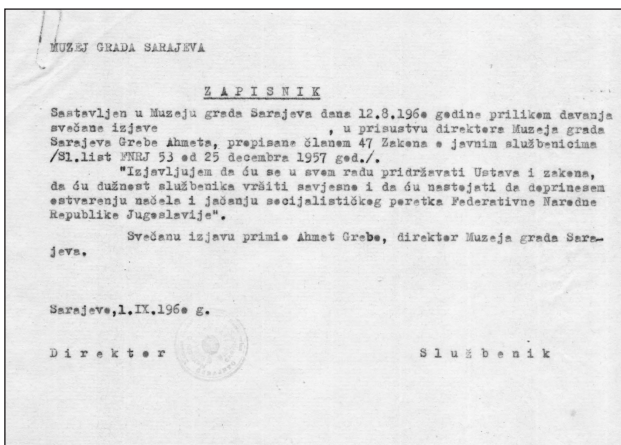
A photograph of Korkut from his personnel file at the Sarajevo City Museum. (Courtesy of Sarajevo City Museum.)

September 21, 1937, and ceased working there on April 6, 1941, the day World War Two in the then Yugoslavia had begun.

The last salary issued to Korkut by the Sarajevo City Museum is dated March 21, 1969.⁹⁸

It is interesting to note that Korkut was 65 years of age when he was taken on by the Sarajevo City Museum. To employ a man of that age and with his unfavorable political background - he had, after all, been convicted of collaborating with the enemy - suggests that the Sarajevo City Museum lacked access to qualified experts capable of taking care of their oriental collections.

⁹⁸ MGS, Personalni dosije Derviša Korkuta, Rješenje broj: 01-46/1 dana 21 March 1969.



*Record of Korkut's solemn declaration at the Sarajevo City Museum.
(Courtesy of Sarajevo City Museum.)*



*Derviš M. Korkut, as curator at the Sarajevo City Museum,
with a Turkish delegation, during the 1960s.
(Courtesy of Gazi Husrev Bey Library.)*

Death and Legacy

Derviš M. Korkut died on the 27th of August, 1969, at the age of 81, still employed as curator at the Sarajevo City Museum. He was buried at the Bare cemetery in Sarajevo. The prominent Bosnian writer Alija Name-tak, who kept a journal of the dead of Sarajevo, recorded that “His funeral was big, but not so impressive as he deserved. However much he knew, he wrote little; perhaps that is how it is in life. That’s why he talked a lot. He was a tireless narrator. Many acquaintances, more than sixty years of age, one man, one life, a good intelligence - all seemed to create numerous topics.”⁹⁹ Samuel Elazar, one of Korkut’s long-time friends, wrote an obituary in which he stated that Korkut was “very elegant in contact with people, a real ‘Ottoman’,” adding that Korkut had inspired him to develop an interest in history.¹⁰⁰ He ends the obituary in a traditional Muslim way: *Rahmetullahi alejhi rahmeten vasiyah* (May God have mercy on him).

In 1974, Korkut’s friend and colleague Alija Bejtić published a small booklet on him with a brief history of his family.¹⁰¹ This remains the most detailed

⁹⁹ Alija Netametak, *Sarajevski nekrologij*, Sarajevo: Civitas, 2004, p. 169-171

¹⁰⁰ Samuel Elazar, “In Memoriam: Merhum Derviš eff. Korkutu”, *Jevrejski Pregled*, Vol. XXI, No.3-4, March – April, 1970, p. 21-23.

¹⁰¹ Alija Bejtić, *Derviš M. Korkut kao kulturni i javni radnik*, Biblioteka pogrebnog društva “Bakije” Sarajevo, 1974.

account of his life to date. Given that it was written under Communist rule, however, the author omitted certain aspects, such as his prison sentence.

Another important contribution to Korkut's memory is *Derviš M. Korkut: Kazivanja o Travniku*, written by Mustafa Gafić.¹⁰² After Korkut's release from prison, he started writing a history of his hometown, Travnik, with the historian Hamdija Kreševljaković. After the book had been written, the young Gafić was hired to take photographs of buildings in Travnik for use in the book. Gafić accompanied Korkut through Travnik in the summer of 1963 and recorded his memories of the time spent with Korkut and the facts and anecdotes Korkut had told him in his book, which was published in 1998:

He loved the Jews and advocated for their rights in 1920, before the Second World War, as he said, and he criticized the anti-Semitism in Hitler's Germany. He was unwilling to answer when I asked him about his contribution to saving the Jewish Haggadah, which, in his opinion, was the work of a group of honest people. It was a collective act by a group of people and not his alone, was how he put it, as was the saving of the white Roma from the fascist terror in the Second World War.¹⁰³

Because of Korkut's image as an enemy of the state in the new Yugoslavia, his contributions were

¹⁰² Mustafa Gafić, *Derviš M. Korkut: Kazivanja o Travniku*, ŠIP DD "Borac" Travnik, 1998.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* p.57

not publicly recognized.¹⁰⁴ In 1994, during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Donkica Papo (Mira Baković) came across a newspaper article on him and decided to write to Yad Vashem, telling them how Derviš and Servet Korkut had saved her life and the Haggadah.¹⁰⁵ Mira wrote a three-page letter to the *Commission for the Designation of the Righteous at Yad Vashem*, explaining how she had been saved by the Korkuts during the Holocaust.¹⁰⁶ In it she calls Korkut “a great friend of Bosnia’s Jews” (*veliki prijatelj jevreja Bosne*) adding that she was the only witness to his having remained a friend even “during the persecution of Jews when we had few true friends who were ready to risk their lives and the lives of their families.”¹⁰⁷ Yad Vashem recognized the Korkuts as “Righteous among the Nations” on December 14, 1994, at the Israeli embassy in Paris.¹⁰⁸

The bond between the Korkuts and the Bakovićs would continue in later years, when Korkut’s daughter

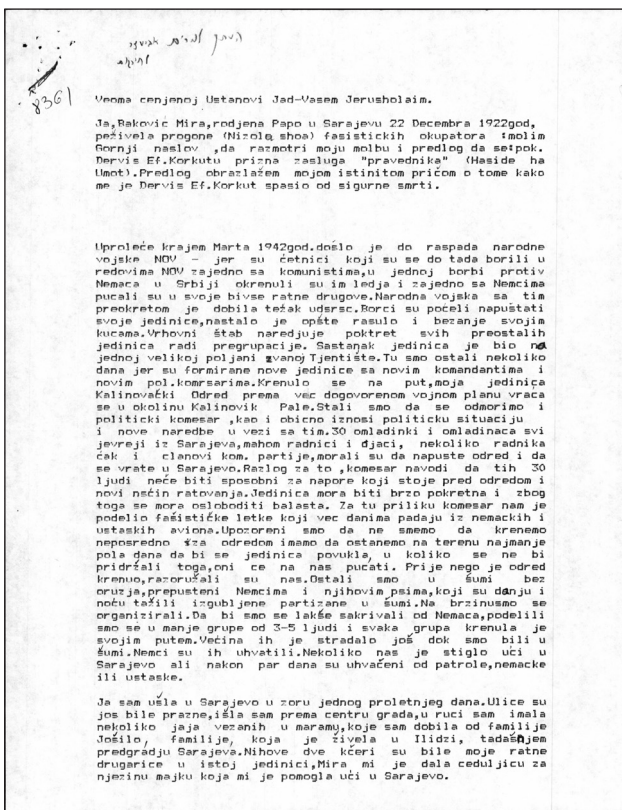
¹⁰⁴ A 1989 documentary *Haggadah: About the Sarajevo Haggadah* (D&D Art and Sutjeska Film) tells the story of the rescue, without mentioning Korkut at all.

¹⁰⁵ The letter, written in Serbo-Croatian, is dated 20.2.1994 and can be found in the Yad Vashem Archives (YVA). In the letter, she gives details about her role in the Partisans and about the Korkuts.

¹⁰⁶ Geradline Brooks, “The Book of Exodus”, *The New Yorker*, 25 November 2007, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/12/03/the-book-of-exodus>

¹⁰⁷ YVA, Derviš & Servet Korkut File, No. 6323, *Veoma cenjenoj Ustanovi Jad-Vasem Jerusolaim*, 20.2.1994, p.3.

¹⁰⁸ Yad Vashem, The Righteous Among the Nations Database, Derviš&Servet Korkut, https://righteous.yadvashem.org/?search=dervis%20korkut&searchType=righteous_only&language=en&itemId=4021797&ind=0



Letter written by Donkica Papo (Mira Baković) addressed to Vad Vashem on 20 February 1994. (Courtesy of Yad Vashem Archives.)

Lamija, who had married in Kosovo, managed to escape the Serbian attacks in 1999 and found safety in Israel.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Davor Baković, son of Yugoslav Partisan and Second-Generation Link to Muslim Righteous Among the Nations, *Yad Vashem*, <https://www.yadvashem.org/articles/interviews/bakovic.html>.



Jevrejska Zajednica Bosne i Hercegovine -- Sarajevo
Jewish Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina -- Sarajevo
הקהילה היהודית בבוסניה והרצגובינה - סרייבו
Dobrovoljacka 83 • 7100 Sarajevo

Yad - Vashem
n/r Mirjam Štajner-Aviezer

Draga Mirjam,

Sarajevo, 15. novembar 1994.

Prema dogovoru napravio sam malu istragu o Derviš eff. Korkutu, za koga je molbu o davanju statusa **pravедника** dala gđa Mira Babović rod. Papo, a broj predmeta u Yad-Vashemu je 6232. Šaljem ti sve raspoložive podatke koje mi je skupila grupica ljudi koja ga je lično znala i pratila njegov rad tokom prošlog rata. Mislim da je sve veoma pozitivno i u svoje ime se pridružujem molbi gđe Babović da se Derviš eff. Korkutu prizna status **pravедника**.

Primi mnogo srdačnih pozdrava iz Jevrejske opštine Sarajevo i od mene.


Ivica Črešnjek
Predsjednik

*Letter by Jewish Community President Ivica Črešnjek endorsing Korkut's case, written while in Serb-besieged Sarajevo, 15 November 1994.
(Courtesy of Yad Vashem Archives.)*



בזיכרה טוד המאורסה
זכור
Remembrance is the
Secret of Redemption
(Ezekiel 40:2)

כאינו קיים עולם חלא

כל המקיים נפש אחת

WHOEVER SAVES ONE LIFE IS AS THOUGH HE HAD SAVED THE ENTIRE WORLD

WHOEVER SAVES ONE LIFE IS AS THOUGH HE HAD SAVED THE ENTIRE WORLD

תעודת כבוד Certificate of Honour

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT IN ITS SESSION OF DECEMBER 14, 1994 THE COMMISSION FOR THE DESIGNATION OF THE RIGHTEOUS, ESTABLISHED BY YAD VASHEM, THE HOLOCAUST HEROES & MARTYRS REMEMBRANCE AUTHORITY, ON THE BASIS OF EVIDENCE PRESENTED BEFORE IT, HAS DECIDED TO HONOUR

Derviš & Servet Korkut

WHO, DURING THE HOLOCAUST PERIOD IN EUROPE, RISKED THEIR LIFE TO SAVE PERSECUTED JEWS. THE COMMISSION, THEREFORE, HAS ACCORDED THEM THE MEDAL OF THE RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS. THEIR NAME SHALL BE FOREVER ENGRAVED ON THE HONOUR WALL IN THE GARDEN OF THE RIGHTEOUS, AT YAD VASHEM, JERUSALEM.

Jerusalem, Israel
FEBRUARY 23, 1995

בישם רשות הזיכרון יד ושם
ON BEHALF OF THE YAD VASHEM DIRECTORATE

וזאת לתעודה שבישיבתה מיום יא טבת תשנ"ה החליטה הוועדה לציון חסידי אומות העולם עליך רשות הזיכרון יד ושם על יסוד עדויות שהובאו לפניך, לתת כבוד ויקר ל

דרוויש ו-סרובט קורקוט

על אשר בשנות השואה באירופה נטו נפשם בכפם להצלת יהודים נרדפים. עידי הודפיהם להעניק להם את המדליה לחסידי אומות העולם. שמם יונצח לעד על קיר כבוד בחורשת חסידי אומות העולם ביד ושם.

ניתן היום בירושלים
בג אדר א' תשנ"ה

בישם הוועדה לציון חסידי אומות העולם
ON BEHALF OF THE COMMISSION FOR THE DESIGNATION OF THE RIGHTEOUS

כל המקיים נפש אחת קיים עולם חלא

כל המקיים נפש אחת קיים עולם חלא

Certificate of Honour by which Derviš and Servet Korkut are named Righteous Among Nations by Yad Vashem Directorate dated 23 February 1995. (Courtesy of Yad Vashem Archives.)



One of the last known photos of Korkut before he passed away in 1969 in Sarajevo. (Courtesy of Gazi Husrev Bey Library.)



Servet Korkut, passed away in 2013 in Sarajevo. (Courtesy of Eli Tauber and Zoran Kubura.)

Academic work

Korkut did not leave a large volume of written work. He did, however, do significant and extensive research and translations of foreign documents and texts. Alija Bejtić drew up a bibliography of his articles in various newspapers and journals.

Korkut's first known published article was *Carigradski utisci* (Istanbul impressions) in *Gajret* in 1911, in which he gave his impressions upon arriving in Istanbul to study.¹¹⁰ *Gajret* was the publication of the prominent Bosniak pro-Serb oriented organization of the same name, which had provided financial support for Korkut's studies in Istanbul.

For nearly the following ten years there is no sign of any publications, until he wrote two articles on sobriety for *Pravda* in 1920.¹¹¹ *Pravda* was the official newspaper of the Yugoslav Muslim Organization, of which Korkut was a member.

The Turkish influence on Korkut may be seen in his translation of two works by Halide Edib Adivar. Adivar was a Turkish author famous for her work on the emancipation of women in the Turkish Republic. Korkut translated segments of two of her works:

¹¹⁰ "Carigradski utisci", *Gajret*, Sarajevo, IV/1911, 4, p.51-53.

¹¹¹ "S.A.S contra S.H.S", *Pravda*, Sarajevo, III/1921, 24(262), 3 March, p.1; "Svjetska borba protiv alkohola", *Pravda*, III/1921, 40(278), 14 April, p.1.

Atesten Gömlek (Shirt of Fire)¹¹² and *Harab Mâbedler* (Temples in Ruins)¹¹³ in *Gajret* in 1924 and 1925, respectively.

During 1926, Korkut's focus was again on sobriety, when he published three articles in different journals, including the official congress proceedings from the International Congress against Alcoholism, which was held in Tartu, Estonia, in 1926.¹¹⁴

After spending some days in the Dubrovnik Archive, he published "A Note on Turkish documents in the Dubrovnik Archive" (*Nešto o turskim dokumentima arhiva dubrovačkog*) in the *Herald of the National Museum* in 1928.

Korkut's fascination with archival documents led him to research on a range of interesting topics. He published several articles in the Sarajevo-based Jewish Voice (*Jevrejski glas*) during 1928 and 1929 under the title of "Sarajevo Jews in the year 1848"¹¹⁵, dealing with the *Kefileme defteri*, an Ottoman census in Sarajevo that provided valuable information on the Jewish population in the city.

He dealt with the issue of alcoholism again in 1928, when he presented and later published a paper on "Alcoholism among Muslims" at the Congress of Muslim Intellectuals organized by *Gajret* on

¹¹² Published in *Iršad*, 1923.

¹¹³ "Ognjena košulja, roman Halide Edib Hanym", *Gajret*, VIII/1924 and IX/1925; "Porušeni hramovi", *Gajret*, IX/1925, p.170-171.

¹¹⁴ Congrès International contre l'alcoolisme : Tartu du 21-29 juillet 1926. – Tartu : Édition du Comité d'organisation, 1926.

¹¹⁵ "Sarajevski jevreji u godini 1848", *Jevrejski Glas*, Sarajevo, I/1928 and II/1929.

September 6, 1928.¹¹⁶ Korkut co-presented and published a further two papers, “On Agriculture among Muslims” and “On the Muslim Women Question”, at the Congress.¹¹⁷

After assisting reconstruction of an Ottoman inscription on the Mehmed Pasha Sokolović Bridge at Višegrad, he published an article on it in the *Herald of the National Museum*.¹¹⁸

While employed at the State Museum in Cetinje, Korkut came across several Oriental manuscripts and published a short article on them in *Zapisi* in 1932.¹¹⁹ A particularly interested one contained the verdict of an Ottoman court in Podgorica related to a dispute between the famous Montenegrin Bishop Danilo I. Petrović Njegoš and some Bosniak Muslims from Žabljak over the rights to fishing grounds on the river Šujica in Montenegro.¹²⁰ The Ottoman court ruled in favor of Njegoš. In 1937, Korkut published an article on “Reports by the Turkish Commission on the Podgorica Massacre of 1874.”¹²¹

In 1938, he published several pieces arising from his archival work. One was on a telegram from Mufti

¹¹⁶ “Alkoholizam među muslimanima”, *Gajret*, 19/20, 1928, p. 305-306.

¹¹⁷ “O poljoprivredi među muslimanima”, *Gajret*, 21, 1928, p.322-323.

¹¹⁸ “Obnova natpisa na Sokolovića mostu u Višegradu”, *Glasnik Zemaljskog muzeja*, XLI/1929 (2), p.115-120.

¹¹⁹ “Orijentalni rukopisi u biblioteci cetinjskog muzeja”, *Zapisi*, VI/1932, XI, p.169-173.

¹²⁰ “Miscellanea Balkanica I.”, *Narodna starina*, XII/1933, p.70-72.

¹²¹ “Izvjestaji turske komisije o podgoričkom pokolju 1874. godine”, *Zapisi*, X/1937, XVIII, 1-6, p.231-242.

Jusuf Deljević of Bijelo Polje in the Sanjak region concerning the emigration of Bosniaks.¹²² Another essay related to the fight for religious and educational autonomy by Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹²³ His interest in Albanians led him to research and write on the tradition of the “blood feud.”¹²⁴

Korkut published a further three articles in 1939 related to the archives in Cetinje, on personal letters and correspondence between King Nikola and other high-ranking figures.¹²⁵

In 1940, just before the Nazi attack on Yugoslavia, Korkut published a short essay in Belgrade on “Anti-Semitism and the Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, as part of an edited anthology.¹²⁶

In 1942, he published an article on Potur Šahidija, in the *Herald of the National Museum in Sarajevo*.¹²⁷ It was about the first Bosnian-Turkish dictionary, written by Muhamed Hevaji Uskufi in 1631, and it contained a translation and analysis of parts of the work.

122 “Telegram bjelopoljskom muftiji o iseljavanju muslimana”, *Zapisi*, XI/1938, XX, p.378.

123 “Crnogorska diplomacija i borba bosanskohercegovačkih pravoslavnih Srba za vjersko-prosvjetnu autonomiju”, *Novi Behar*, XII/1938, p.177-184.

124 “Jedan zvanični umir u krvi među arnautima 1879. godine”, *Kalendar Gajret*, 1939, Sarajevo, p.148-158.

125 “Dva pisma Knjazu Nikole Grinu (Green) engleskom otpravniku na cetinju i generalnom konzulu u skadru”, *Zapisi*, XII/1939, p.164-166.; “Pismo sultanu Abdul Hamida Knjazu Nikoli”, *Zapisi*, XII/1939; “Kopija pisma Pupina jednom crnogorskom ministru”, *Zapisi*, XII/1939, p.228-229.

126 “Antisemitizam je stran muslimanima u BiH” in *Naši Jevreji, jevrejsko pitanje kod nas, zbornik mišljenja javnih radnika*, Belgrade, 1940, p.53-54.

127 “Makbul-i arfy (Potur Šahija) Uskufi Bosnevija”, *Glasnik Zemaljskog muzeja*, LIV/1942, p.371-408.

Korkut's next major work was published after his release from prison. With the Bosnian historian Hamdija Kreševljaković, he co-authored a history of his hometown Travnik. It was published in 1961.¹²⁸ The same year, he published an article on the 1875-1879 uprising in Herzegovina.¹²⁹

In 1963, he published an article on Oriental inscriptions in the ethnographic collection in the Sarajevo City Museum, which was a result of his work in the Museum after his release from prison.¹³⁰

In 1966, he published an article on a Turkish-Serbo-Croatian dictionary from the 17th century and an article on an Ottoman-era census in Sarajevo from 1841. He translated the entire census conducted by Mula Muhamed Mestvica. It was published in 1970, one year after his death.¹³¹

Korkut translated a number of works that remained unpublished during his lifetime, including a volume by Bosnian chronicler Mula Mustafa Firakija, translated in 1957, but never published.¹³²

Looking through Korkut's published articles, it is clear he was not a prolific author. His method was

¹²⁸ *Travnik u prošlosti 1464-1878*, Biblioteka Zavičajnog muzeja Travnik, 1961.

¹²⁹ "Neobjavljeni dokumenti o hercegovačkom ustanku (1875-1879) i o događajima koji su mu prethodili", *Grada Naučnog društva BiH*, Sarajevo, XI/1961, 8, p.71-120.

¹³⁰ "Orijentalni natpisi na predmetima etnografske zbirke Muzeja grada Sarajeva", *Prilozi za proučavanje istorije Sarajeva*, I/1963, p.85-99.

¹³¹ *Mula Muhamed Mestvica: popis uzajamnog jamčenja stanovništva u Sarajevu iz 1841. godine*, Muzej grada Sarajeva, Sarajevo, 1970.

¹³² *Firakina svaštara: Zbornik (medžmua) Sarajlije Mula Mustafe Firakije iz početka XIX vijeka*.

usually the translation and presentation of archival documents, along with comments and analysis. His fields of interest varied widely, depending on where he was working, and his published articles can usually be traced back to the archives he had access to at the time. As his work at the National Museum in Sarajevo, the Museum in Cetinje, and the Sarajevo City Museum was primarily archival, with an especial focus on the categorization and translation of certain documents, he wrote articles on the interesting facts he discovered as he worked his way through the archives.

APPENDIX

*Anti-Semitism is foreign to the Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina*¹³³

At this present moment, when propaganda is so rife, this question [the Jewish question in Yugoslavia] needs objective discussion.

Attempts to graft anti-Semitism onto our sentiments should be rejected, because it is foreign to us as Muslims. The anti-Semitism being discussed here was imported from outside.

If there are some among us who do harbor some anti-Semitism, they most assuredly do so due to reasons of business competition. This is purely a 'market-place' type of anti-Semitism, and has nothing to do with the recent [introduction of anti-Semitism].

It is clear without a doubt that this anti-Semitism does not have roots amongst us and is not home-grown.

¹³³ Original article published in *Naši Jevreji i jevrejsko pitanje kod nas* [Our Jews and the Jewish Question with us]. Belgrade, 1940. The English translation is by Kemal Bakaršić from his article "Manuscript Codex C-4436 of the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina a.k.a. The Sarajevo Haggadah" published in, *Fragmentsi kulturne historije Bosne i Hercegovine*, Editio Civitas, Sarajevo, 2005.

Especially regarding the Bosnian Jews, of whom it may be said that they have become more native than even they consider themselves. Our people do not consider them a foreign body.

In other countries, anti-Semitism is more often than not a lightning rod used to redirect attention from more important problems.

Because the reasons for anti-Semitism do not exist among us, there is no need for special measures for its suppression. But I must emphasize that the poor Jewish population in Sarajevo and in Bitola [Macedonia] needs help and more must be done to take care of them than has been heretofore. Those poor people live in misery, and their number is much higher than we think.

There have been several attempts on the part of non-Muslim circles here, some of them quite recent, to engage Muslims as an avant-garde against the Jews. All such attempts have failed, because it has proven impossible for the Muslim population to adopt two levels of morality: one for them, the other for everyone else.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a classic case of religious tolerance. The public at large is not sufficiently aware of this. Many wise and intelligent foreigners have, however, read this rare example of religious tolerance from our stone monuments with respect. The Jewish cemetery in Sarajevo, one of the oldest in Europe, and one which has never been desecrated, is proof of it.

The first synagogue in Bosnia was built on *vakuf* [Islamic endowment] land. The shining crown and most brilliant proof of religious tolerance in Bosnia is the following, however: the places of worship of all four local religions stand one beside the other.

Chronology

- On 5 May 1888, born in Travnik.
- On 26 June 1909, completed high school in Sarajevo.
- On 13 July 1914, graduated in Theology at the Ottoman University in Istanbul.
- From 1 July 1916 to 21 September 1920, teacher at the Teacher Training School in Derventa.
- In 1918, mobilized as military imam in the Austro-Hungarian Army.
- From February 1920 to 21 June 1921, teacher at the regional madrasa in Sarajevo.
- From 21 June 1921 to 22 June 1923, head of the Muslim Department at the Ministry of Religions in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in Belgrade.
- From 14 April 1927 to 20 August 1929, curator of the National Museum in Sarajevo.
- On 18 August 1929, appointed Mufti of Travnik.
- From 3 June 1930 to 21 September 1937, curator of the State Museum in Cetinje.
- From 21 September 1937 to 7 June 1947, curator of the National Museum in Sarajevo.
- From 8 July 1953 to 1969, curator at the Sarajevo City Museum.
- On 28 August 1969, died and buried in Sarajevo.
- On 23 February 1995, Derviš and Servet Korkut are named Righteous Among Nations by Yad Vashem Directorate in Israel.

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Finding documents related to Korkut was a challenge. His personal documentation and archives were confiscated by the Communist authorities after World War Two and much of the rest was destroyed during the 1992-1995 Siege of Sarajevo. Documents were thus scattered throughout the region and wherever Korkut spent time working. I was not able to locate his personnel file from the National Museum in Sarajevo, as it had apparently been handed over to the Archives of Bosnia and Herzegovina after World War Two. There is no doubt valuable information in the archives of the Yugoslav secret police (UDBA), but it is not currently available to researchers. Other documents and archives certainly exist that, when discovered, will contribute to future writings on Korkut.

ABiH — Arhiv Bosne i Hercegovine (Archives of Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Zemaljski muzej Sarajevo (National Museum of Sarajevo)
Zbirka dosjea državnih službenika

ARIZBiH — Arhiv Rijaseta Islamske Zajednice Bosne i Hercegovine (Archives of the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Vrhovno islamsko starešinstvo
Ulema-medžlis

HAS—Historijski Arhiv Sarajevo (Historical Archives of the City of Sarajevo)

Zbirka Plakata

Ostavština Fehim Spaho (Personal collection of Fehim Spaho)

AKPD Zenica – Arhiv Kazneno-popravnog doma Zenica (Archives of the Zenica Correctional Facility)

Muzej grada Sarajeva (Sarajevo City Museum)

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YVA – Yad Vashem Archives

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