Historically, the Czech experience with Islam was mainly influenced by the Turkish Menace (the 150-year Ottoman presence in Hungary, including land which later became southern Slovakia, and the two Ottoman sieges of Vienna in 1529 and 1683). Due to its geographical location and the nature of its historical development, however, the territory of historical Czech Lands (Bohemia and Moravia) never actually had direct contact with Islamic civilization.

By 15 July 1912, the demographic changes had eventually led to Emperor Franz Josef I’s signing of Acts 367/12 and the Imperial Act in Bad Ischl, by which the State henceforth recognized the ‘Handaf Islam’s religious rite’. On the basis of this Act, the Handaf modified an old legal norm to be understood within the Crown Lands and those Lands represented in the Imperial Council as a religious community in the sense of the basic constitutional law of 21-12-1887, i.e. the December Constitution, which legally anchored the new constitutional framework as part of Austro-Hungarian settlement. The Act permitted the participation of ulama from Bosnia in setting up and running the communities within the Empire. However, their work had to be monitored and if it was felt to contravene the public interest, it could be forcibly disbanded. In terms of later development, the key section of the Act was para. 7, which stated that ‘concerning the marriages of adherents of Islam and the maintenance of birth, marriage and death records’ any (local) secular regulations had to be applied.

The year 1918 marked the disintegration of the Habsburg monarchy, but the previous Islamic demographic movements did not prevent the creation of the new borders. Many of the Balkan Muslims who had settled in the territory, which had become the Czechoslovak Republic, decided to remain and others were attracted by the better economic situation as well as by previous business and family relationships. These were soon joined by the numerous Islamic immigrants from the Soviet Union (especially the Chechens and the Tartars). Only in the mid-1930s did the Muslims, mostly residing in Prague and Brno, begin to form a religious association. Before then, only individuals gathered spontaneously and together with members of the same nationality.

The first considerations about the establishment of an Islamic community were concretely formed by the end of 1934. The mixed group of both foreign and Czech individuals assembled a group of practising Muslims to found the ‘Muslim Religious Community’ from Czechoslovakia with a Centre in Prague’. The participants agreed to ascertain the number of Prague Muslims and to evaluate their willingness to take part in building up a community, to obtain as much information as possible about one another, to organise educative and cautious missionary activities, and to construct a mosque in Prague. The Community was then solemnly founded on April 25, 1935 as an assembly, which included numerous sympathizers from the Prague intelligentsia, business circles interested in trading with Islamic countries and the Czechoslovak diplomatic corps.

Four basic components contributed to the birth of the Community: a) foreign Muslims living in or visiting the local area; b) foreign Islamic institutions; c) representatives of some Islamic states; and d) Czech converts. Available archive materials reveal that the Community was the focus of a mostly stable set of foreign practising Muslims, who saw in their participation in the Community, an opportunity to reinforce their Islamic identity and to broaden societal life in the spirit of their own traditions. The idea of reinvigorating the Islamic mission never seemed to be in the forefront – perhaps only because of the foreigners’ caution in their relations to the Czech state authorities, which did not seem to express a particular understanding for the Community’s purposes. On the government’s side, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Justice took measures to prevent the spread of Islamic thought. In addition, the Orthodox Church reclaimed the old estates previously occupied by Muslims, and in certain official documents is often preceded by the honorary title Hadji, which Brikcius had the right to bear as a member of the CCR. The most influential figure among them was Alix Bohdan Brikcius, who assumed the name Mohammad Abdullah after conversion. In addition, he gave his name in his books and in certain official documents is often preceded by the honorary title Hadji, which Brikcius had the right to bear as a member of the CCR. The most influential figure among them was Alix Bohdan Brikcius, who assumed the name Mohammad Abdullah after conversion. In addition, he gave his name in his books and in certain official documents is often preceded by the honorary title Hadji, which Brikcius had the right to bear as a member of the CCR. The most influential figure among them was Alix Bohdan Brikcius, who assumed the name Mohammad Abdullah after conversion.