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1 Having spent ten years in subordinate posts at the Technical Bureau of the Waqf Ministry, Max Herz (1856–1919; fig. 1) became chief architect to the Egyptian Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l’Art Arabe in 1890. He occupied this position, which had been created for him personally, until the end of 1914. As chief architect, he played a key role in the conservation of Arab-Islamic architectural monuments in Egypt, in Cairo primarily. The importance of the job was indicated by the fact that notwithstanding the losses in the course of previous centuries, Cairo was the world’s richest city with regard to Islamic architecture. At the same time, Herz directed the Arab Museum in the city (also known as the “National Museum of Arab Art” at the time; it is currently the “Museum of Islamic Art”), considering this post ancillary to his main one. He was active as a private architect, too, personally preferring the Neo-Mamluk style, yet erecting buildings in other styles in addition. Owing to his long and continuous involvement with Cairo’s architectural monuments, Max Herz Pasha, an accomplished architect by training as well as naturally, was regarded by many contemporaries as the foremost authority on the history of Arab-Islamic art in Egypt. For instance, D. S. Margoliouth, professor of Arabic at Oxford, in 1907 referred to Max Herz as “the highest authority on Moslem architecture”. Herz was deeply interested in questions of architectural history in general and in those of Arab-Islamic architecture in particular, with special regard to the theoretical and practical problems he encountered in the course of a long career devoted to the conservation of architectural monuments. We are indebted to him for a number of publications in these fields. At the same time, it must also be said that Herz’s regular workload was so heavy that he was unable to devote himself to scholarly tasks to the extent that he would have liked: in his letters to Ignaz Goldziher, he complains repeatedly that he has much interesting data, but never finds enough time to process it and write it up. His letters to Goldziher and to Max van Berchem betray a certain insecurity in the field of scholarly publications: owing to work pressures, he evidently could not live up to his own high expectations. The present article endeavours to give an overview of Herz’s most
important works, with some emphasis on his writings in Hungarian, which may not be accessible to most readers.


During his term of office, Herz edited the annual reports (Bulletins) of the Comité. These consisted of the Comité’s proceedings and of the reports of its Technical Bureau (Section Technique) also. Herz wrote the reports himself, beginning with no. 48 (29 November 1888) and ending with no. 485 (25 June 1914). From 1897 on, pithy descriptions of monuments written by Herz were added as appendices. It was planned to launch these as independent publications constituting a separate series, but only one volume ever appeared: this was Herz’s fine short monograph on the mosque of Amir Ganim al-Bahlawan (883/1478; no. 129). The Bulletins contain a wealth of invaluable information on monuments. They are, however, not easy to use, mainly since, owing to the nature of the conservation work, information on individual buildings is scattered in many different places. Moreover, monuments often appear under different names. Published in 1914, the Index General by Herz Pasha up to the year 1910 is of great help in this respect. The lack of a similar reference work for the post-Herz period is acutely felt. Together with the Comité archives (now kept by the Supreme Council of Antiquities), the Bulletins allow us to reconstruct in very considerable detail the Comité’s activities and its work on monuments. Comparable documentation for the period in question exists in no other Islamic country.

In connection with his tasks in the field of conservation, Herz was, from 1892 onwards, in charge of the above-mentioned Arab Museum, first with no special title and then, from 1901, with that of director. The latter appointment was connected to the erection and opening of a splendid new building designed to house the Museum and the Khedivial Library (1315/1898–1321/1903; U46; fig. 2–3). In this capacity, Herz published, in two editions, a French-language catalogue of the collections (fig. 4). Both editions appeared in English also, and the second in Arabic as well. Contemporaries praised these catalogues not just for the importance of the objects they featured and for the object descriptions they gave, but also on account of the essays that preceded each of the sections into which the catalogues were divided. These dealt individually with the different fields of Arab-Islamic art represented in the collections (plaster, stone, marble, mosaic, panelling, mashrabijya, ivory, woodwork, metalwork, doors, glass, pottery, tissues, textiles, and leatherwork [book bindings]); the introductions to both editions offered concise accounts of the history of Arab-Islamic Egypt and of its architecture, too. The noted archaeologist, art historian, and islamisant Friedrich Sarre described the introductions and essays as “splendid presentations of the most diverse fields of Egyptian-Muhammadan art.” Herz gave brief descriptions of the Arab Museum’s collections in several other places also. One such piece, published in the Gazette des beaux-Arts, gave an interesting account of how qamariyyas were produced.

Source: Private collection.


Source: Marburg an der Lahn (Germany), Bildarchiv Foto Marburg.

Source: Marburg an der Lahn (Germany), Bildarchiv Foto Marburg.
4a. The first original French edition of Herz Pasha’s catalogue of the Arab Museum.

The dedication by “the author” to the Library of the Academy is in Ignaz Goldziher’s hand, whom Herz asked to deliver the catalogue.

Source: Courtesy of the Oriental Collection, Library of the Hungarian academy of Sciences, Budapest (Hungary).
In 1899, Herz published a monograph on what has always been regarded as the most important monument of Mamluk, and perhaps Arab-Islamic, architecture in general, the Madrasa of Sultan Hasan (757/1356; no. 133). The splendid and much admired madrasa had been in a poor state of repair for a long time and urgently needed restoration. However, the likely expenses were so high that for decades such a project could not even be considered. At the same time, the Comité also wanted to promote scholarly activity that would yield important publications in its own field of interest; this question was repeatedly discussed in its sessions. It was in this context that Herz published a lavish folio-size (42 x 52 cm) monograph on the madrasa in 1899, partly with the aim of drawing attention to it, emphasizing the significance of the monument and of the necessary work, and thus helping to raise the funds required (fig. 5–6). Herz succeeded in this last respect: in 1902, he was able to begin the restoration project, which was to cost L.E. 40,000, an unprecedented amount in those days. He also managed to guide the project towards its completion: only minor work had to be finished by his successor Achille Patricolo after his expulsion from Egypt at the end of 1914. This magnificent edifice has never failed to attract the attention of architectural historians, who have looked into various questions surrounding its details. Of these scholars, Keppel Archibald Cameron Creswell, Hasan ’Abd al-Wahhab and Michael Meinecke stand out. Yet in 1990, more than ninety years after the appearance of Herz Pasha’s book, John Michael Rogers felt obliged to write: “The interpretation of its architectural history has not significantly advanced since the publication of Max Herz Bey’s monograph.” The next such study of Sultan Hasan’s Madrasa appeared only in 2008. Its author, ‘Abdallah Kahil, summarizes the
research achievements of the decades between, during which much new data on Islamic architecture has, of course, emerged. Although able to draw on the many new Arab sources – including waqfiyyas – brought to light since Herz Pasha’s time, Kahil retains the method used by his predecessor: profound study of the monument itself, the consulting of written documents and pictorial representations, and comparison with parallel monuments in Cairo and elsewhere in the Islamic world. This last aspect is of paramount importance in the analysis of the monument, which was built in an age characterized by a great mobility of builders and artisans. However, the basic questions, “some of which still linger with us”, as Kahil says, were formulated by Herz himself: the stylistic connections of the monument, the stylistic origin (Seljuq?) of the grandiose portal, the unusual placement of the mausoleum behind the qibla wall, the origins of the cruciform madrasa, and the possible identity – and origin – of the architect18. The only matter raised by later scholars that is new is the elusive question of the madrasa’s interpretation; Kahil conveniently summarizes their opinions on this without, however, reaching a clear-cut and convincing conclusion. His approach differs from that of his predecessors in one fundamental respect: whereas in view of the madrasa’s many unusual – sometimes innovative – characteristics art historians, Herz included, tended to scrutinize and trace the origins of these odd features, Kahil, without losing sight of the last mentioned, concentrates on the Mamluk traits of the edifice. His work offers a wealth of new data, analyses, and insights, and can justly be regarded as a major achievement in the history of research on the madrasa. Yet it neither supersedes nor replaces Herz Pasha’s elegant monograph, as Kahil himself admits, stating that the last-mentioned study “remains indispensable”19. A part of Herz’s data is not available elsewhere; his wise insights and considerations have not ceased to capture the attention of subsequent generations. Any serious study of this magnificent monument must start from his work: Herz Pasha’s meticulous argumentation based on his thorough and intimate acquaintance with the monument cannot be overlooked. In addition, his superb large-size plans, drawings, and photographs documenting the madrasa’s pre-restoration state will always be of scientific value.
5. The Mosque of Sultan Hasan. Detail of the main iwan. Watercolour by Max Rabesz (?).

Source: Max Herz Bey, La Mosquée du Sultan Hassan au Caire, Cairo: IFAO, 1899, Plate XV, detail.


Source: Max Herz Bey, La Mosquée du Sultan Hassan au Caire, Cairo: IFAO, 1899, Plate X.

Source: Max Herz Pasha, *La Mosquée du Sultan Hassan au Caire*, Cairo: IFAO, 1899, Plate X.
Twelve years later, in 1911, Herz published a short article in Hungarian on the madrasa; the article dealt briefly with the Comité also\(^5\). In the meantime, the restoration had been under way since 1902, as he himself wrote. Among others things, he repeated here what he had already written concerning the unusual traits of the madrasa and also the possible origins of the architect: he dealt with these subjects in Chapter Three of his monumental work. However, in the 1911 article Herz mentioned that since the publication of his monograph, which corroborated his hypothesis that ties existed between certain unusual characteristics of the madrasa and the architecture of the Rum Seljuqs, a new find had been made. This was a stone portal found in the Sultan Hasan madrasa in the course of work on the western wall that displayed a “real anomaly”, namely that stalactites arranged horizontally served as the doorframe. It was possible to discover a related structure in the Sultan Han (626/1228) located between Konya and Aksaray in the erstwhile realm of the Rum Seljuqs. Herz discovered it in an illustration in Friedrich Sarre’s account of his travels in Asia Minor, which had already served as a major source for similar conclusions concerning eventual Seljuq connections in Herz’s monograph on the madrasa\(^2\)1.

In 1900, Herz contributed a short account of Arab-Islamic art to the “general section” of a three-volume guidebook to Egypt in the Collection des Guides-Joanne series (republished in 1905). It was not a history of Arab-Islamic art in the traditional chronological manner, but a description of characteristics, forms, materials, and building types under the following headings: “Theory of Architecture” (Materials; Forms – 1. Walls, 2. Coverings [Ceilings, Vaults]; 3. Supports; 4. Apertures [A. Doors, B. Windows]; Decoration), “Applied Art”, and

Source: Source: Max Herz Bey, La Mosquée du Sultan Hassan au Caire, Cairo: IFAO, 1899, Plate XV, detail.
“Religious Art” (The Mosque, Its Description – Cruciform Mosques, Mosques with Central Domes, Madfan or Turba; Minarets, Furniture; Sabils, Wikala, Baths, Drinking Troughs, Military Architecture). It was rounded off by a brief sketch of the history of Arab-Islamic art in Egypt. This part is illustrated with beautiful drawings (fig. 8–10), at least two fine examples of which were executed by Herz personally (fig. 9–10). Some of the plans prepared by Herz for this guide appear in later volumes of the Guides Bleus series, the successor to Guides-Joanne, too (fig. 7). The treatment of the subject reminds the reader of the approach chosen by Herz’s mentor and predecessor Julius Franz Pasha in his book on Islamic architecture (which features many drawings by Herz [e.g., fig. 9, 11–14]), the second, enlarged, edition of which appeared in 1896. In the “special section” of the Guide-Joanne, Herz dealt with the various Arab-Islamic monuments one after another.

7. Plan of al-Azhar Mosque (359-/970-; no. 97) by Herz.

Herz’s ground plans of al-Azhar are important testimonies for the significant transformations on this mosque in his time. Creswell pointed out this fact about the ground plans in Baedeker’s guidebooks (without expressly mentioning Herz’s name), stressing that there was a little else to be found in the Waqf and the Comité archives and even the originals of the plans could be traced in his time (The Muslim Architecture of Egypt, vol. I, p. 42, no. 6 and p. 47-48, fig. 12-13). The present plan belongs to this series. It comes from the Guide-Joanne of 1900/1905 and is a slightly modified version of the plan in Baedeker’s third (1984), fourth (1897) and fifth (1902) German and fourth remodelled English editions (1898).


In all probability, these fine drawings to illustrate the chapter on supports are not by Herz but by a member of his staff.

9. The *sabil-kuttab* (public fountain and elementary school) of Sultan al-Ghawri (909/1504; no. 67).

Herz published these fine drawings (fig. 9-10) in several places, among them in the volume on Egypt in the Guides-Joanne series as well.


In 1907, Herz published a concise history of Islamic art in Hungarian. It constituted a section in a comprehensive history of art in four volumes brought out under the auspices of Hungary’s Ministry of Religious and Educational Affairs. The work was meant to address the educated general public, with special emphasis on serving a need in the field of public education. Herz was very glad to be given this professional challenge, and regarded the task as a patriotic duty, too. He laid great emphasis on placing the development of Islamic art in the proper historical setting, which he everywhere outlined succinctly. According to him, three basic areas, broadly speaking, could be differentiated within Islamic art in general: I. – The Egyptian Style; II. – The Persian-Arab Style; and III. – The Style of North Africa and Spain. For practical reasons, he chose to demonstrate the general traits of Islamic art in a detailed treatment of the Egyptian style, discussing the special characteristics of, and the differences between, the other styles in the second part of his contribution. The second part deals with the main characteristics of the “other” Islamic countries in general, too (fig. 15–16). The section on Egypt occupies 86 of the 154 pages, along with 105 figures and 6 plates (2 in colour) of the 167 figures and 18 plates (2 in colour), that the work contains. In Herz’s approach, several aspects are especially prominent, the combination of which adds up to a remarkable achievement. In his treatment of styles and buildings, Herz’s training as an architect comes to the fore repeatedly: for him, styles and stylistic elements are not merely decorations or aesthetic features determined by fashion and aesthetics, but regularly fulfil physical, architectural functions. On the other hand, he is not a dispassionate, “objective” chronicler of modifications and changes in style in history, but an enthusiastic connoisseur deeply attached to his field of work. He has very definite tastes and opinions, which he never
tries to conceal: he regularly voices value judgments. These opinions and judgments are mostly convincing and demonstrate an exquisite taste. He worked and wrote with gusto: it is this feature of the account above all that captivates the reader and makes the reading of this work a refreshing intellectual adventure. His low opinion of Ottoman architecture in general and of Ottoman architecture in Egypt in particular is expounded succinctly here, too. This view was based on professional grounds merely and was not politically or personally motivated. As a matter of fact, Herz sharply distinguished between Egyptian Arab art and Ottoman art, the second of which he considered alien to Egypt (fig. 13). Elsewhere he described the spread of Ottoman architecture as representing the “death agony” of Arab art in Egypt.

12a. Cross-section and plan of Sultan Barquq’s funerary mosque (complex of Farag ibn Barquq; 803/1400; no. 149). Drawing by Herz.


12b. Cross-section and plan of Sultan Barquq’s funerary mosque (complex of Farag ibn Barquq; 803/1400; no. 149). Drawing by Herz.

13a. Cross-section and plan of Sinan Pasha’s Mosque in Bulaq (now in Cairo; 979/1571; no. 349). Drawing by Herz.

His thorough familiarity with the subject shines through on every page: when Herz wrote this work, he had been engaged day and night on the monuments of Cairo and Egypt for more than a quarter of a century. Notwithstanding the concise nature of his work, Herz does not restrict himself to architecture, but devotes some space to applied art also; we find occasional references to painting and coinage, too. At the same time, his treatment of the subject is not confined to the core lands of Islam, but extends to such distant areas as Central Asia and India. There can be no doubt that this work is now dated in view of the exponential growth in Islamic art studies and of the information explosion that has taken place in this field. Yet it offers data, minute observations, and thoughts, some of which would surely repay closer scrutiny. For instance, Herz comments on the origins of the cruciform madrasa. These he traces to Qasr Kharana (Syria at the time, Jordan today), which he regards as being of Sassanian (Iranian) provenance. In 1900 already, Herz made a similar statement in his account of Arab art in the Egypt volume of the Guides-Joanne series, saying that Sultan Saladin (d. 589/1193) had imported the cruciform madrasa from Syria. In 1904, he again repeatedly advocated a Persian origin. Earlier, in 1895, he had expressed the view that this system had been “created” by the Ayyubids (564/1171–648/1250). The idea that the cruciform madrasa was introduced into Egypt from Syria had been voiced by Stanley Lane-Poole as early as 1886. Around 1901, Max van Berchem advocated the same idea, hinting at possible connections with areas further east as well. In one place, van Berchem pointed to what is now known as the Reception Hall in the Palatial Complex in the Citadel of Amman as the cruciform madrasa’s prototype;
many regarded this monument as being of Sassanian provenance in those days. Herz seems to have changed his mind later on. Towards the end of his life, he adopted the opinion that this madrasa type was not an importation from Syria, but that its origin could be found in local dwelling houses in Egypt. He intended to dedicate a separate article to this subject, but death prevented him from doing so. In 1923, four years after Herz’s untimely decease, Creswell voiced a similar idea, stating that the cruciform madrasa evolved in Egypt ultimately from the qa’as of dwelling houses. Creswell added that in 1920–1921 already he had presented his theory to Max van Berchem during the final visit to Egypt by that great epigraphist, who had seemed convinced by it. Meinecke advocated an Iranian origin.

14. Cross-section of the central part of the qa’a (hall) with the lantern in Gamal al-Din al-Dhahabi’s mansion in Cairo. Drawing by Herz.

15. Plan and cross-section of the mausoleum of Sultan Baybars al-Zahir in Damascus (676/1277). Drawings by Herz.


Herz deals with the origin of stalactites also⁹. There is some data – partly accompanied by illustrations – on Herz’s donations of relevance to museum collections in Berlin,
Budapest, and Cairo. Acquaintance with this work is essential for students of the historiography of Arab-Islamic art in Egypt.

Chapter “G” of the last work (p. 147–189, including many illustrations; fig. 5, 9, 15–16, 21 top right–21 centre) dealt with “Art under the Mamluk Sultans”, which was also the subject of a short article in Hungarian (6 pages) brought out by Herz three years earlier in a semi-popular periodical published by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. If we compare the two accounts, we find that the earlier article concentrates on theoretical questions first and foremost and that the book chapter is a traditional presentation of the subject with descriptions of a number of major monuments. Herz points out in the article that the Ayyubids (564/1171–648/1250) introduced the cruciform mosque (madrasa) type from Persia and that the next dynasty, the Turkoman Mamluks (648/1250–784/1382), initially avoided using it because it was connected to the memory of their immediate predecessors. Instead, they resorted to the traditional, primitive plan for mosques, which involved porticos or a combination of hypostyle halls. However, after the consolidation of their power, the Mamluks reverted to the new type introduced by the Ayyubids. This took quite a long time, Herz wrote, and they did so by adding an important new element, the column, to it, thus bringing about a considerable modification of the original idea. “The rows of columns opened up a wide and fruitful field for ingenious artistic combinations with respect to both construction and decoration, thus favourably contributing to the numerous foundations that were erected under the names of khanqa and ribat (convent): the core of these buildings remained a ‘mosque’ both literally and metaphorically.” A real revolution took place in Arab-Islamic architecture in Egypt with the gradual replacement of brick by stone as building material. This necessarily led to solutions of structural problems that changed the direction of progress in architecture; at the same time, it was also the source of a highly favourable modification of the exterior arrangement of buildings. The results of this development can be studied on monuments from the fifteenth century. Domes and minarets are no longer haphazardly placed, but their location is determined by the requirements of harmony. In general, the overall effect of a building, its perspective view, is carefully and ingeniously calculated: “The harmony of the whole is surpassed only by the richness and purity of the details.” The plain facades of earlier times yield to those elaborated with artistic care. In the interior, the appearance of plaster diminishes considerably while marble of all kinds and porphyry gain in importance. The overall application of columns leads to the neglecting of cumbersome vaults, with richly ornamented wooden ceilings replacing them. The preponderance of exquisite ornamentation characterizes applied arts, too. The late fifteenth century represents the apogee of Arab art in Egypt, achieving perfection in all its aspects, Herz declares, before the ensuing of its “death agony” after the Ottoman conquest (923/1517).

In 1904, Khedive ‘Abbas II Hilmi commissioned Herz to complete the Rifai‘i mosque (1287/1870–1330/1912; U103). Responding to an order by Princess Khushyar Hanim, Khedive Isma’il’s mother and ‘Abbas II Hilmi’s great-grandmother, the architect Husayn Fahmi began its construction according to his own design in 1870. Soon, though, work had to be suspended for financial reasons, and for a quarter of a century the edifice slumbered unfinished in the shadow of Sultan Hasan’s splendid madrasa (fig. 17). Having completed the work, Herz privately printed a fine booklet on the mosque, which was distributed at its inauguration in 1912. It remains our best source on this highly significant building, which is considered a milestone in the development of modern Arab-Islamic architecture not only in Egypt, but also in the Islamic world more generally.
Herz also published an article on the mosque in Hungarian which contains data not found in the booklet, along with some interesting insights. It is worth reading and comparing the two works, because even differences in the formulation of the same facts can sometimes help us better perceive the real state of affairs by illuminating aspects and nuances one would otherwise miss. For example, Herz's contribution to the mosque's exterior, and especially to the final design of the main entrance on the northwest facade, can be determined more precisely if the French booklet is read in the light of the Hungarian article. Also, the difference in the time of writing may be of interest in some respects. That is to say, Herz wrote the booklet before the mosque's inauguration, while he produced the article after it. Hence, the precise date of inauguration is the one given in the Hungarian article (19 April 1912); the date appearing in the booklet (New Year's Day 1330/22 December 1911), which is also often quoted in the scholarly literature, is wrong: evidently the inauguration was postponed, possibly because of delay with the building and other work.

17a. The Mosques of Sultan Hasan and al-Rifa'i.

Postcard, 1937-1938. (The postcard can be dated on the basis of the reconstruction works in progress on the minaret of the Mosque of Qanibay al-Sayfi Amir Akhur [908/1503; no. 136]).

Source: Max HERZ, La Mosquée el-Rifaï au Caire. Paru à l'occasion de la consécration de la mosquée, Milano: [Imp. Humbert Allegretti], s.d. [1911], p. 14 (fig. 3).
17b. Plan of the immediate neighbourhood.

The orientation of the plan has been adjusted to that of the photograph.

Source: Max HERZ, La Mosquée el-Rifaï au Caire. Paru à l’occasion de la consécration de la mosquée, Milano: [Imp. Humbert Allegretti], s.d. [1911], p. 14 (fig. 3).
18. The Mosque of al-Rifa'i. Husayn Fahmi Pasha's original plan and the final plan with Herz Pasha's modifications.

Source: Max Herz, La Mosquée el-Rifaï au Caire. Paru à l'occasion de la consécration de la mosquée, Milano: [Imp. Humbert Allegretti], s.d. [1911], p. 8 (plate II), p. 29 (plate X).
19a. The Mosque of al-Rifa’i. Drawing showing Husayn Fahmi Pasha’s original design for the southern façade.

Source: Max Herz, La Mosquée el-Rifaï au Caire. Paru à l’occasion de la consécration de la mosquée, Milano: [Imp. Humbert Allegretti], s.d. [1911], plate V.

19b. The Mosque of al-Rifa’i. The final design for the southern façade by Herz Pasha.

Source: Max Herz, La Mosquée el-Rifaï au Caire. Paru à l’occasion de la consécration de la mosquée, Milano: [Imp. Humbert Allegretti], s.d. [1911], plate XIII.

Source: Max Herz, La Mosquée el-Rifaï au Caire. Paru à l'occasion de la consécration de la mosquée, Milano: [Imp. Humbert Allegretti], s.d. [1911], plate XVI.

19d. The Mosque of al-Rifa'i. Main prayer hall. Photograph. The interior decoration is Herz Pasha's work in its entirety because the original designs could not be found.

Source: Max Herz, La Mosquée el-Rifaï au Caire. Paru à l'occasion de la consécration de la mosquée, Milano: [Imp. Humbert Allegretti], s.d. [1911], plate XVIII.

Herz devoted a number of shorter articles to various topics in Arab-Islamic art, mainly those with some bearing on his everyday work in the Comité. Some of these papers are of lasting value, while others have been superseded by later research. Yet others seem to

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have served day-to-day publicity or public relations purposes merely. Nevertheless, even those in the last two groups contain interesting pieces of information and are therefore a must for the historian of the Comité. To the third group belongs Herz’s brief article on the Comité written in June 1890, after his appointment as chief architect but before the formation of its separate Technical Bureau. A German version of the article appeared in 1891. In the meantime, significant changes had taken place in the Comité’s structure, including the formation of the Technical Bureau within it. These changes were communicated in the German version. On the other hand, probably due to lack of space, certain important details were omitted from it. Herz devoted part of a brief article in Hungarian to these details. It is no longer than an encyclopaedia entry, yet it may be of interest to historians of the Comité on account of the first-hand data contained in it, e.g. information concerning budgets and the numbers of monuments conserved, listed according to the sums spent on them.


Herz had close ties to the Hungarian Museum of Applied Arts in Budapest. Together with the Hungarian Society of Applied Arts, this institution published a journal, to which Herz contributed a series of six short articles on Arab ornamentation between 1887 and 1890. He wrote that he had been in the “company” of Arab ornamentation for many years and had become very fond of it. However, this was not the primary reason for the presentation. Herz was convinced, as he wrote, that applied arts in the West could not
afford to ignore Oriental art, especially Arab art, which was purely decorative in character. Rather, it was in the Westerners’ “vital interest” to study it unceasingly. He considered the samples he was about to present not to be of primary importance on a world level. However, all were, he maintained, instructive as well as attractive to anyone familiar with the realm of forms. This was in accordance with the declared aims of the Society, which had been founded in 1884 with the goal of fostering the development of applied arts in Hungary. The first article dealt with woodcarvings and leather book bindings, while the second discussed the zawiya of Farag ibn Barquq (Zawiyat al-Duhaysa; 811/1408; no. 203) and its ornamentation. Herz mentioned (in 1887) that this used to be a place of execution with criminals being hanged on the northern grille of the sabil, and that the last execution had taken place “thirteen years ago”. It was on this account, he maintained, that the monument was called the “Zawiya of Horror”. This interpretation of the name is not accepted nowadays, but must have been the current one in Herz Pasha’s time. Now it is generally believed that the word duhaysha, which also means “astonishment”, “amazement”, denotes a strikingly beautiful building in the present case. Herz also discussed two faience plates from the collections of the Arab Museum. The subject of the third article was the sabil-kuttab of Sultan al-Ghawri (909/1504; no. 67). Article Four was devoted to ornamentation on hexagonal tables from mosques which had, in Herz’s view, been used as stands for candlesticks (Ar. kursi [al-sham’a]), to ornamentation in the mosques of al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh (818/1415; no. 190), Khawand Baraka (Umm al-Sultan Sha’ban; 770/1318; no. 125), and to beautiful ornamentation from the sabil of Bashir Agha (1131/1718; no. 309). Article Five dealt with book bindings, a bronze grille in the courtyard of the mosque of Sultan Barquq (786/1384; no. 187) and a bronze door knocker from the mosque of Qigmas al-Ishaqi (885/1480; no. 114). Article Six dealt with Gamal al-Din al-Dhahabi’s mansion (1047/1637; no. 72). The series included thirty-nine drawings by Herz, which were really exquisite and some of which have been published elsewhere, too (fig. 9–10, 20–22).
Salsabils were slanting rippled marble slabs in public fountains to cool the water which flowed over them. See id., *Catalogue of the National Museum of Arab Art*, Stanley Lane-Poole (ed.), London: Gilbert & Rivington and Bernard Quaritch, 1896, p. 9, no. 2.

21b. The Sabil-kuttab of Sultan al-Ghawri. Details of the western window.

21c. The *Sabil-kuttab* of Sultan al-Ghawri. Details of the southern window.


21d. The *Sabil-kuttab* of Sultan al-Ghawri. Details of the *salsabil*.

In Herz Pasha’s day, numerous Mamluk monuments were painted in striped patterns and some in chessboard ones. The Comité did its best to rid them of this late “embellishment”. At the same time, it was evident that in some cases the striped effect was original and had been achieved by the application of layers of stone of different colours or shades. To take a wider perspective, from the late eighteenth century onwards the idea gradually gained acceptance that classical Greek architecture had in fact been polychrome. It was in 1830 that the German-French architect Jakob Ignaz/Jacques Ignace Hittorf published his discoveries, accompanying his work with an exhibition of watercolours giving hypothetical reconstructions of Greek temples in Sicily that showed how they might have looked in antiquity. Featuring vivid, bright, and sometimes even harsh colours in the Mediterranean sun, these pictures shocked purists accustomed to the “noble simplicity and silent grandeur” of classical monuments in the natural colours of their building material, which resulted in a puritanical appearance. As a matter of fact, the original painted colours had already weathered away when modern antiquarianism was born in the eighteenth century. A public outcry developed and a long controversy ensued that continued right up until the end of the nineteenth century. Slowly it became evident that polychromy had been an essential constituent of medieval architecture in Europe as well. It was in this context that Herz published an article in two parts on polychromy in Arab-Islamic art. After enumerating various kinds of polychromy inherent in the natural coloration of building materials, he concentrated on painted polychromy. The monuments that were not newly striped in Herz’s time were plain. Europeans were full of praise for the serene beauty of these monuments appearing in the pristine natural colour of the building materials used. In his article, Herz gave examples of traces of paint on various Arab-Islamic monuments in Cairo, inside and outside. In this way, he proved that originally they had been painted in colours, which had, however, disappeared in the meantime on account of weather effects, as was the case in Greece and elsewhere in Europe, too. Thus it was demonstrated that polychromy, including gilding, had in fact been an essential constituent of the aesthetic elements responsible for the overall effect of Arab-Islamic monuments in Cairo. Herz concluded the article with a brief discussion of painted objects made of wood.

Herz wrote an intriguing article on the basins in the sahns of mosques. Herz’s thesis was that the fountains in the sahns of mosques like Sultan Hasan, Sarghatmish (757/1356; no. 218), or Barquq (in the Coppersmiths’ Bazaar) originally served aesthetic purposes only, because these mosques possessed special ablution sections in secluded areas. It was, he maintained, as a result of the Ottoman conquest (923/1517) that the conquerors – who had been used to fountains in the courtyards of Ottoman mosques, where courtyards occupied a different place in the ground-plan of mosques as compared to Mamluk Egypt – turned the central parts of sahns into ablution areas. However, since they were followers of the Hanafi legal school (madhhab), who were obliged to use running water for ritual ablution, next to the central basin in the Sultan Hasan mosque they erected a special water tank with taps, as could be seen in Herz Pasha’s time (fig. 23). (In original Ottoman mosques, the domed structure in the courtyard covered a device with taps, while in the Sultan Hasan mosque it covered a basin. In Cairo, the Muhammad Ali mosque [1265/1848; no. 503] in the Citadel may serve as a characteristic example of the Ottoman system in this respect.) The local Egyptian population followed suit, performing ritual ablution in the sahns. Egyptians, however, adhered to the Shafi‘i legal school and thus could use the original basin for this purpose, because their prescriptions were less rigorous with
respect to the purity of water. On this basis, on Herz’s insistence, ablution was forbidden at the fountain in the sahn of the newly restored Barquqiyya mosque, because an original ablution court for this purpose existed there in impeccable condition. Herz Pasha’s theory was highly plausible and elegant, but it has been refuted by the waqfiyyas of the respective mosques that have gradually become known since his death. It is clearly stated in them that the secluded ablution sections as well as the fountains in the central sahns were intended for ritual ablution. However, the question remains: why was it necessary to install two such different systems for the same purpose? Was there any difference between their functions? ‘Abdallah Kahil uses the expression “ceremonial ablution” in connection with the fountain in the sahn of the Sultan Hasan mosque without comment. It is not clear whether he has something special in mind or whether he is using this expression simply as an equivalent for “ritual ablution”. However, the waqfiyya has simply wudu’ in the place referred to; the term proves nothing special in this respect.

To state matters more generally, once there was an ablution fountain in the sahn already, why was it necessary to add an extra secluded ablution section? Or to put them the other way round: if there was such a section already, why did the builder add an extra fountain in the sahn for the same purpose? Were they perhaps intended to serve different layers of society? There is no such hint in the waqfiyyas themselves and such an assumption contravenes the basic tenets of Islam prescribing the equality of the faithful. When describing certain large marble vessels (Ar. zir), Herz mentions that according to Prisse d’Avennes, these make it possible for persons of high rank to perform a superficial version of this religious duty without having to mix with the lower strata of society in the courts of ablution. In his later writings, Herz rejected this explanation: in his view, the vessels in question held drinking water. In my opinion, the inscription Herz cited to prove his point is not convincing. (Incidentally, no comment on this subject can be found in the first French edition of the catalogue of the Arab Museum. The English translation by Stanley Lane-Poole adds Prisse’s view in a footnote. The description just referred to appears in the second French edition and in the subsequent English translation of this. Hence, there is a possibility that this note may have been added by Lane-Poole, who as a matter of fact is described on the title-page as “editor” and not simply as “translator”. However, it is difficult to imagine that he would have done this without Herz Pasha’s consent.) On the other hand, we have to assume that Herz Pasha’s statement reflected contemporary custom and beliefs, as did Prisse’s, too: maybe they changed in the meantime? Or else, one of the two was wrong. If Prisse was right, here we would have a case of separate ablution areas for different strata of society, which might perhaps have been the reason for having different ablution areas in mosques, too. Such differentiation is not wholly unknown in Islamic countries. In his description of a bath in Cairo, ‘Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi (d. 629/1231) mentioned that there were “special cabinets for persons of distinction so that they do not mix with common persons, and do not appear naked in public.” In his description of Cairene baths written in the years 1825–1828, Edward William Lane mentioned different arrangements for “the lower orders” also.
22a. The mansion of Gamal al-Din al-Dhahabi. Detail of the façade of the maq’ad (loggia) with mashrabiyya-balustrade. Drawing by Herz. Cairo, 1890.

Source: Private collection.

Source: Private collection.

From one particular point of view, secluded ablution sections were better suited for the purpose of ablution. Namely, the sound of splashing or running water induces men to urinate. Yielding to this physiological urge, they would relieve themselves into the basins of the fountains as is apparent from waqfiyyas which categorically forbid such behaviour. This problem was easily solved in secluded ablution sections, because as a rule they contained latrines, too.

When Herz Pasha restored Sultan Hasan, he removed the Ottoman water tank with its domed canopy to the sahn of the Maridani mosque (739/1339; no. 120), which lacked a fountain. This step resulted in a public outcry: many protested against the destruction of the familiar picturesque view. However, after years of debate, during which even its return to Sultan Hasan was seriously considered, the Comité decided that the Ottoman tank should remain in the Maridani mosque, where it can be seen to this day (fig. 24).
In an article which was in fact the text of a lecture given at the Institut égyptien on 1 April 1898, Herz voiced the idea of encouraging, or even enforcing, the adoption of the Arab style, with special emphasis on traditional projecting bay windows (mawardas) with mashrabiyya screens, in the construction of new buildings in native quarters, especially in the vicinity of architectural monuments. This idea was later adopted by Lord Kitchener, who envisaged the transformation of the neighbourhood of the Sultan Hasan and the Rifa‘i mosques in an appropriate way. Nothing came of these efforts: only one building seems to have been erected in the Neo-Mamluk style. Similar efforts were also recorded in Istanbul. As a matter of fact, this was not an original idea on the part of Herz. As he himself stated, he wanted to follow the example of Nuremberg in this respect. However, Nuremberg was not a haphazardly chosen German city. Having fallen into decline after mediaeval wealth and splendour, it was gradually rediscovered by protagonists of the romanticist movement from 1800 onwards – this process went hand in hand with a reappraisal of the Middle Ages and Gothic architecture, too, which had been the target of utter contempt since the Renaissance. Revered as the Protestant counterpart of Rome, soon Nuremberg was exalted into the glorified quintessence of German art and architecture, the foremost German city, which fully embodied Germany’s spirit and soul at the time of the apogee of its power. Led by the desire to preserve the “old architectural physiognomy” of Nuremberg, from 1820 onwards there had been efforts to adapt the facades of new buildings to the traditional appearance of the city, within the framework of a “historicist city conservation”. This meant that the Neo-Gothic style predominated in the first decades only to yield to Neo-Renaissance architecture later on. The idea seems to have gained acceptance fairly quickly, since even in the absence of an official statute many new buildings were erected in the characteristic local “Nuremberg style” (Nürnberger Stil), a Renaissance revival style, in the 1890s without apparent pressure from the municipal authorities. In 1899, a local police statute was passed to this effect. In a further extension of this idea, the city also served as a stage and backcloth for newly institutionalized historical processions. These were intended to conjure up the memory
of its noble past, partly transforming it into a veritable lieu de mémoire in a symbolic sense
66. The choice of tableaux represented a definitive programme: the aim was to keep
historical tradition alive as an operative factor exerting a decisive influence on the
shaping of modern society with the special aim of integrating the – often disturbing –
corollaries of recent economic and social development within an accepted system of
patriotic values. The ideal was an organically arranged society where the various strata
coexisted in peaceful and mutually advantageous cooperation. At the same time, the
adoption of the “Nuremberg style” was closely linked to the efflorescence of the modern
industries of tourism and gastronomy, not only in Nuremberg itself but elsewhere, too. In
addition to a certain similarity in cultural and political significance, Herz may have seen a
close parallel between Nuremberg and Cairo in that, like the Egyptian capital, Nuremberg
possessed architectural monuments, surviving in a relatively closed ensemble, in great
abundance and concentration. In this regard, just as Nuremberg was unmatched in
Germany, so, too, was Cairo unmatched in the Arab-Islamic world67.

Herz’s last work, published posthumously, was devoted to the Qalawun complex
(683/1284; no. 43)68. In view of his long involvement with this truly outstanding
architectural ensemble, including the ongoing work aiming at complete restoration
which he could not finish (fig. 25), there was at the time no-one more qualified to write
such a monograph. Yet unhappy historical circumstances prevented him from
accomplishing this task in accordance with his gifts and capabilities: he wrote the study
in exile in Switzerland without access to his notes, photographs, or his books, or being
able freely to consult a library specialising in Arab-Islamic art69. Still the monograph
remains a basic reference work which has retained its relevance up to the present,
notwithstanding the important contributions on this subject by later scholars such as
Creswell, Meinecke, and Wolfgang Mayer70.
25. Qalawun's Madrasa. Design for the reconstruction of the interior. Drawing by Herz. Zurich, 1919. The actual reconstruction carried out by Achille Patricolo after Herz Pasha's expulsion was based on a different conception.

Herz published this drawing in his monograph on the Qalawun complex: Die Baugruppe des Sultans Qalāʿīn in Kairo, Hambourg: J. Friederichsen & Co., 1919, pl. 27 (fig. 37) (Abhandlungen des Hamburgischen Kolonialinstituts, 42).
Source: Private collection.

20 It should be noted that Herz’s letters to Max van Berchem also contain many references to art history.

21 We know of a number of publications, among them a history of Arab-Islamic architecture in Egypt and several works on Coptic art, which Herz was planning to write, but could not, owing to his heavy workload in the Comité and to his enforced retirement and expulsion.

22 Herz Pasha’s scholarly activities in the field of art history were in fact ancillary to his conservation work in the Comité. He would have loved to devote himself to scholarly research on a much larger scale, but his daily workload prevented him from doing so. His scholarly publications represented the world standard at the time and played a considerable role in the evolution of Islamic art history. However, seen from a modern point of view, much of his output is now behind the times, the fate of most scholarly work eventually. There are some exceptions, though: his monographs on the Sultan Hasan mosque and the Qalawun complex, the Comité Bulletins together with the Index general, and the booklet on the Rifa'i mosque. These will never lose their relevance. On the other hand, owing to his long involvement with monuments and objets d’art in Cairo and in Egypt, all his writings, even his shortest articles, contain important data not to be found elsewhere and will serve as source material for subsequent generations of art historians which they will ignore at their peril. And let me conclude with a personal remark. Re-
reading the entirety of Herz’s publications now, I was struck once again by the gusto with which he worked, and also by the personal involvement – along with the commitment and love of his field – apparent from his elegant style. They made my present task an intellectual and emotional experience that was highly enjoyable.

NOTES

1. The numbers after monuments refer to the Index of monuments, Cairo, Survey of Egypt, 1951. In the case of mostly late monuments, which do not appear in this list, Nicholas Warner’s numbers with a U-prefix (unnumbered) have been adopted. See Nicholas Warner, The monuments of historic Cairo. A map and descriptive catalogue, Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2005 (American Research Center in Egypt Conservation series).

2. On him see István Ormos, Max Herz Pasha (1856–1919). His life and career, Cairo: IFAO, 2009 (Études urbaines, 6).


8. Now Nicholas Warner, op. cit. (note 1), fills this void to a great extent because he gives relevant data concerning every monument dealt with in this work. On the other hand his data are not exhaustive, as far as I can see, and in accordance with his work’s concept, he does not cover monuments lying outside “Historic Cairo”, e.g. those in the two cemeteries and in the vicinity of Old Cairo.


21. Ibid., p. 212–215. Friedrich SARRE, Reise in Kleinasien-Sommer 1895–Forschungen zur seldjütkischen Kunst und Geographie des Landes, Berlin: D. Reimer, 1896. Herz must have had Plate (Tafel) XXXIII in mind, which depicts one of the two lateral recesses in the main portal crowned by horizontal stalactites. These last structures must be the “false stalactites” (stalactites employées à faux) which he describes in Max HERZ, op. cit. (note 14), p. 25, too. This question must have occupied Herz’s mind for some time because – with Sarre’s permission – he reproduced the abovementioned Plate XXXIII in his own account of Islamic art too. Max HERZ, “Az Iszlam műveszete [Islamic art]”, in Zsolt BEOTHY (ed.), A műveszetek tortenete [The history of arts], Budapest: R. Lampel (F. Wodianer), 1906–1912, vol. 2, p. 220 (fig. 253). He did not refer to this question in this last place. See the portal in Comité Bulletin 32, 1915–1919, part II, plate CXIV.
25. Herz’s ground plans of al-Azhar are important testimonies for the significant transformations on this mosque in his time. Creswell pointed out this fact about the ground plans in Baedeker’s guidebooks (without expressly mentioning Herz’s name), stressing that there was a little else to be found in the Waqf and the Comité archives and even the originals of the plans could be traced in his time (The Muslim Architecture of Egypt, vol. I, p. 42, no. 6 and p. 47-48, fig. 12-13). The present plan belongs to this series. It comes from the Guide-Joanne of 1900/1905 and is a slightly modified version of the plan in Baedeker’s third (1901), fourth (1897) and fifth (1902) German and fourth remodelled English editions (1898).
27. Ignác GOLDBIHER, “Herz Miksa [Max Herz],” Budapesti Szemle [Budapest Review], vol. 179, 1919, p. 232–233. A German (French?) version must have existed too because Herz thanks Max van Berchem for reading the manuscript and for making useful comments. Max HERZ, op. cit. (note 21), 259, n. 1. Herz seems to have kept working on the manuscript with the aim of drawing up an enlarged, expanded version for a later publication – before the outbreak of the war he already had a contract for a French edition. There is no trace of the manuscript(s?) now.
32. He describes the palace without mentioning its name. Max Herz, op. cit. (note 21), p. 139, 209, 261. In modern times it was the Czech-Austrian explorer-Arabist, Prelate Alois Musil, who first drew attention to it in 1902. However, his description is so brief–mentioning a “quadrangular courtyard” merely in the relevant context–that it is most unlikely for Herz to have based his theory on it. It is to be assumed that he acquired the relevant data through personal channels. Musil published some more details about the Qasr, including a ground plan, in 1907. Alois Musil, “Kusejr ‘amra und andere Schlösser östlich von Moab. Topographischer Reisebericht, I. Theil.,” Sitzungsberichte der Philosophisch-Historischen Classe der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, no.144, 1902, part VII. Abhandlung, 18–19, fig. 11. Kusejr ‘Amra (Vienna, 1907), vol. 1, p. 38–40, 43–44 [fig. 36–37], 97–101 [fig. 82–86]. The ground-plan is on page 97 (fig. 82). On Kharana see now Heinz Gaube, “‘Amman, Harane und Qastal. Vier frühislamische Bauwerke in Mitteljordanien”, Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins, no.93, 1977, p. 64–66. Cameron Creswell, A short account..., op. cit. (note 30), p 96–105. 
35. Max Herz, Catalogue sommaire des monuments exposés dans le Musée national de l’art arabe, Cairo: G. Lekegian, 1895, XXXVII and LIII in introduction. 


42. Ibid., p. 116 (fig. 125), p. 117 (fig. 128), p. 117, n. 1, p. 124, n. 1, p. 126 (fig. 213).


44. On this subject see the preceding section.


46. Max HERZ, La mosquée el-Rifaï au Caire. Paru à l’occasion de la consécration de la mosquée, Milano: [Imp. Humbert Allegretti], [1911].


48. The date given in the Hungarian article is confirmed by contemporary Egyptian newspapers too. On the Rifa‘i mosque in general see István ORMOS, op. cit. (note 2), p. 430–456.


51. Max HERZ, op. cit. (note 20), p. 210–215, esp. 210–211. For the convenience of the reader the amounts are given in crowns, the official currency of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the time, but the exchange rate Herz applied can be calculated on the basis of data given on p. 214.


68. Max HERZ, Die Baugruppe, op. cit. (note 37).

69. On the genesis of this monograph, see István ORMOS, op. cit. (note 2), p. 260, 486, 488.


72. Ibid., p. 359–364.

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