Ormos István,
Max Herz Pasha (1856-1919). His Life and Career.

Le Caire, Ifao (Études urbaines, 9), 2009, 2 vol., 636 p.
ISBN : 978-2724705089

Max Herz, the Hungarian chief architect of the Comité, and first director of what was to become the Museum of Islamic Art, is an important figure in the history and historiography of Islamic monuments and their conservation in Egypt. The choice of which buildings to be conserved and the methods used in restoring or conserving them were not his alone, but his energy in reconnaissance of monuments in the field, from Alexandria to Aswan, in organizing the committee meetings of the Comité de conservation des monuments de l'art arabe, and in supervising the restoration works, mark him as someone of unusual enthusiasm and efficiency.

This is clear from this outstanding work of research, written by Ormos with a love for his subject, but one which does not get in the way of balanced judgments of his achievements. To embark on this undertaking required a command of an unusual range of languages: Hungarian, Arabic, German and French, to which one can add the evident fluency that the author has in Italian and English (the latter of exemplary lucidity). The meticulous approach of the author is reflected in his decision to give the original as well as translations of all important sources. The range of documentary sources that the author has amassed is staggering; it includes little known sources such as Patricolo's privately published history of the Comité, interviews published in Hungarian newspapers, private correspondence between Herz and other scholars such as Goldzhier and van Berchem, and, most impressive of all, documents (including a huge amount of visual material) from all the archives of the Comité itself, split as they are between different government offices in Cairo.

At the same time, it may be emphasized that this is a work that is designed to be used as a reference rather than to be read through. The list of honours that Herz received (p. 19-25), for instance, is little more at times than just that, a list; it could equally well have been placed in an appendix. It may also be overkill to give the grades that Herz received in his architectural classes at the Vienna Technical College (p. 8), although perhaps this should be seen in the context of the author's keenness to refute the accusation made by Reid (p. 11) of Herz's lack of qualifications for the post of Chief Architect of the Comité.

The bulk of Herz's work was with the Comité, and Ormos provides an excellent summary in Chapter 2 of the founding of that body and their work before moving onto Herz's input on individual buildings. He is rightly keen to point out that, although standards then were different from what they are now over a century later, Herz's work by the standards of its time was unusually sensitive to the issue of conservation versus restoration, and that where intervention could be minimal, this is what was preferred. Ormos provides a useful corrective (p. 89) to the exaggerated opinion of some recent scholarship that claims that the Comité was trying to "transform Cairo into a medieval city for the sake of foreign connoisseurs and tourists."

Chapter three contains discussions, sometimes extremely extensive, of particular buildings that Herz worked on. As anyone knows who has tried to use the Comité *Bulletin*s extensively, finding information on the work done on a particular building involves wading thorough many snippets in many issues. Ormos's arrangement has the merit of accumulating the information (at least with regard to Herz, under whose auspices clearly a great deal of work was done) by monument, making it clear at a glance sometimes what the additions consisted of. I was bemused, for instance, to learn that the *dikka* and fountain in the Barquq complex were new structures designed by Herz, the *dikka* modeled on that of al-Mu'ayyad, and the fountain on that of Sultan Hasan.

Ormos makes it clear that the monograph that Herz wrote on Sultan Hasan was at least partly a fund raising exercise, as the proposed budget for the complex's conservation was hugely in excess of that normally granted to the Comité. Ormos's analysis of Herz's work is expanded in several cases to the scholarly discussion in great detail of related topics, such as the placement over time of ablutions facilities in mosques in Cairo (p. 224-7), and, as part of the entry on the Qaytbay complex in the northern cemetery, the thorny question of the authenticity of the roofs over the courtyards of later Mamluk complexes.

Herz's activities with regard to the Museum of Arab Art and the then proposed Coptic Museum are examined in Chapter four. He was evidently a gifted administrator of the Museum of Arab Art, and was among the first to take active steps towards the realization of a museum of Coptic Art. Ormos makes it clear that Herz's involvement with the latter must have been more extensive than is usually thought, given that one of Herz's major publications (which are discussed in Chapter five) was to be a comprehensive monograph on Coptic churches. The most widely consulted of Herz's publications will always remain

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the Comité *Bulletins*. Probably not available when Ormos was writing, we now have a website that gives access to all of the French and Arabic editions of these, a resource that is searchable and thus that makes finding information on specific buildings much easier (1).

Herz's work as a private architect are considered in Chapter six. His chief work in this respect was the now sadly destroyed Zogheb Palace, designed in a neo-Mamluk style. Illustrating the thoroughness which Ormos devotes to every aspect of his research, he devotes twenty pages (372-91) to an elucidation of the emergence of the neo-Mamluk style, adding useful information on examples in Europe. An extensive quotation of a description of the Zoghreb Palace by Creswell is given, although in one of the very few of the author's lapses the source for this, "Architectural Note…," is not given in his bibliography (2). The photographs of Herz's own villa in Garden City (figs. 263-7) show how much Herz gave up when, at the outbreak of the First World War, he voluntarily went into retirement and exile from Egypt when, had he relinquished his Hungarian nationality, he might have been able to stay at his posts. Ormos is now also able to confirm the suppositions of others that Herz remodeled the Gianaclis Palace, since 1919 the property of the American University in Cairo.

Herz was responsible for the completion of the Mosque of al-Rifa'i, to which Ormos devotes a substantial account (430-56) (3). The plan and bulk of the building were in place when Herz took over, although he had to undertake substantial strengthening of the walls. He designed all of its neo-Mamluk decoration. To the list of commentators on the aesthetics of the building given by Ormos, I would add one that seems particularly cogent, even if it is not easily available, that of Mohamed El-Hamams. He notes that "there is no proper understanding of the purpose and the role of different elements and their spatial relationships in a Mamluk context… High quality craftsmanship is displayed with a swagger in the marble works – the variety of colours, uses and designs being outstanding Mamluk expressions in every respect… It is as if the architects would like to create a structure that could compete in majesty with the best of Mamluk creations, but would only aggregate various elements with a lack of regard as to how they would fit together to create a beautiful and intelligently lit ensemble" (4). At the level of detail, primarily Herz's work, it remains an impressive achievement, even if the building, in terms of form, is a disappointment.

Herz remained an ardent Hungarian nationalist throughout his life, a trait that Ormos evidently admires. Indeed, it would hard to see this work undertaken by any other than a Hungarian. Ormos's pride in his compatriot's achievements are evident, and it should also be clear that he has done an exceptional service to the scholarly community with this publication (5).

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(1) This was prepared by Noha Abou-Khatwa for the Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation: http://www.islamic-art.org/comitte/Comite.asp

(2) Neither is it mentioned in the list of Creswell's publications in *Studies in Honor of Professor K. A. C. Creswell*, (Cairo, 1965), xiv—xix.

(3) One small quibble: Ormos relates (p. 437) that the mausoleum of Shaikh Rifa'i was left in its original place because "Islam forbids the transfer of corpses." Whatever the theory, and even about this there is room for dispute, in practice corpses have frequently been transferred for a variety of purposes.

(4) *The Religious Monuments of the Period of Isma'il Pasha* (1863-1879), MA thesis, American University in Cairo (1992), p. 136-9.

(5) One minor editorial annoyance may be mentioned: although the book is in English, the antiquated French method of placing the table of contents at the back is followed. However, it also be noted that the publisher has lavished a large format layout on the book, and included 289 illustrations, reproduced to a very high quality.

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