

## REVIEW ARTICLE

*Die Geschichte der Erhaltung arabischer Baudenkmäler in Ägypten. Die Restaurierung der Madrasa Tatar al-Ḥiğāziyya und des Sabīl Kuttāb ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān Kathudā im Rahmen des Darb-al-Qirmiz-Projektes in Kairo.* By PHILIPP SPEISER. (*Abhandlungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo, Islamische Reihe*, 8.) Heidelberg: Heidelberger Orientverlag, 2001. 249 pp., 48 plates. ISBN 3 927552 27 5.

The present publication is, as it were, the written summary of the activities of the author in Cairo in the field of the preservation and conservation of monuments of architecture for the period between 1979 and 1990, thus it consists of several interrelated parts. The first section, dealing with the foundation and history of the *Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe*, is a revised version of the author's thesis submitted to the Federal Technical University in Zurich (*Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule in Zürich*). As an introduction, this section also contains a long presentation of the history and development of Cairo, especially in the 19th century. Then follow two reports on restoration work carried out by the author in the historic old city of Cairo: that of the 14th century madrasa-mausoleum of the Mamlūk princess Tatar al-Ḥiğāziyya and of the 18th century Ottoman *sabīl-kuttāb*, erected by ʿAbdarrahmān Kathudā, a characteristic structure consisting of a public fountain and an elementary school, and one of the most conspicuous landmarks of the old city. Both works constituted part of the major Egyptian-German joint project "Darb al-Qirmiz" undertaken by the German Archeological Institute (DAI) in conjunction with the Egyptian Antiquities Organization (EAO), which aimed at the restoration and conservation according to modern standards of a closely delineated area in the historical old city; the Darb al-Qirmiz. The former was carried out in 1980-1982, the latter in 1980-1984. André Raymond, the celebrated authority on the history of Ottoman Cairo, contributed a long essay in French on the life and achievements of the patron of the *sabīl-kuttāb*, perhaps the most active embellisher of the Well-Protected City in premodern times, ʿAbdarrahmān Kathudā. Muḥammad ʿAfifi and André Raymond published the relevant section from a *waqfiyya* by ʿAbdarrahmān Kathudā dated 1744, dealing also with the *sabīl-kuttāb* in question. The original Arabic text of the document is accompanied by a French translation with notes. Finally Peter G. French submitted an essay in English on the ninety-five smoking pipes (complete and fragmentary alike) that were recovered during the restoration work in the madrasa of Tatar al-Ḥiğāziyya. A good selection of photos and drawings makes the work complete.

It must be stated right away that the present work contains a wealth of important source material that is impossible even to list here. The detailed reports of the restoration works on the two monuments not only offer significant insights into the history of these monuments but also document the application of exemplary modern methods in the preservation and conservation of monuments of architecture with special emphasis on the renewed utilization of these structures by the population of the neighbourhood, the nearer and broader environment. The publication of a *waqfiyya* accompanied by explanatory notes by experts is always an exceptional event and constitutes an important step towards an ever deeper understanding of these most important though difficult contemporary documents, shedding light on more and more aspects of medieval life and history. André Raymond's intriguing contribution on the personality of ʿAbdarrahmān Kathudā is a great asset to the publication.

In recent years interest has focused more and more on the Ottoman period of Egyptian history and in this context a detailed account of the personality and life of this outstanding embellisher of Cairo can be regarded as an important case-history, which also makes splendid reading and simultaneously represents a new reappraisal as compared to previous treatments of the subject by the author.

The section which interested this reviewer most, however, is the one dealing with the history of the *Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe*. This body was founded in 1881 and existed until 1953, playing a role that can hardly be overemphasized in the preservation and conservation of monuments of Arab-Islamic, and later also Coptic, architecture in Egypt, but mainly in Cairo. An extensive treatment of the subject has been a *desideratum* for some time. Two shorter treatments existed for the first period of the existence of *Comité* by Achille Patricolo: one was published separately in 1914 and another in Volume 32 (1915-1919) of the *Bulletins*. The former is entitled *Achille Patricolo: La conservation des monuments arabes en Égypte. I. Histoire du Comité*. Cairo 1914, 28 pp. It seems to have been a private publication printed at Le Caire, Imp. M. Roditi & C<sup>o</sup> - 1914. It was to be followed by two other volumes, or rather fascicles: II. *Les méthodes de travail* and III. *Les travaux exécutés*. The reviewer has not been able to find any trace of these works, which probably remained unpublished because of the difficulties entailed by the outbreak of World War I. This rare work, which also contains a bibliography of Patricolo which sheds some light on his earlier activities in Italy before arriving in Egypt, seems to have escaped the attention of the author. The history of the *Comité* presented here is based in the first place on the material contained in the printed *Bulletins* as well as on the practical experiences of the author. In this respect the technical details concerning the methods and procedures adopted by the *Comité* are of special relevance and constitute one of the chief achievements of the present work. The *Comité's* work and achievements are also evaluated and assessed in the light of modern standards and requirements.

The monograph also deals with the person of Max Herz Pasha, among others (pp. 68-70)<sup>1</sup>. Here some inaccuracies can be found, which should be corrected. Herz's birthplace, Otlaka, is not in the so-called historical Banat territory but in the Great Hungarian Plain. He studied architecture in Budapest between 1874 and 1877, not between 1876 and 1877, going subsequently to Vienna, where he studied from 1877 until 1880. In connection with his studies in Vienna the abbreviation *u.a.* (=German for "among others") should be deleted because in Vienna he studied only at the Technical University. Herz studied only architecture but in this area he finished a complete course of studies. It is true that he did not take a degree (*diploma*) but in this he followed the custom of his age. It did not become common to take a degree (*diploma*) at the Technical University in Vienna until after the end of World War I; only very few students did so when Herz studied there. In Vienna his teachers even regarded and

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<sup>1</sup> On him see *István Ormos*: "Max Herz (1856-1919): his life and activities in Egypt." Le Caire - Alexandrie: Architectures européennes 1850-1950. Sous la direction de Mercedes Volait. Cairo 2001. *Id.*: "Preservation and Restoration. The methods of Max Herz Pasha, chief architect of the Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe, 1890-1914." *Historians in Cairo. Essays in honor of George Scanlon*. Edited by Jill Edwards. Cairo 2002. 123-153. and the forthcoming monograph of this reviewer.

remembered him later on as one of the best students<sup>2</sup>. If this *u.a.* is a reference to Herz's alleged studies in music then it is certainly unfounded. Reid's article, which Speiser refers to repeatedly, contains the information that Herz was originally a music teacher and switched to architecture later on, in order to avail himself of the possibilities opening up in Egypt, so to speak, and joining the long rank of obscure Europeans undertaking jobs for which they were totally unqualified. This is based on a misunderstanding<sup>3</sup>. Herz never was a music teacher. According to oral information supplied by his grandson, Mr. Paolo Sereni in Naples, Herz liked music in general, as many people do, but that's all; he did not even play an instrument.

In 1880 he did not return to Budapest from Vienna but left with a family for Italy, from where he also accompanied them to Cairo, where the head of the family was the director of the prestigious Hotel du Nile in the Moski.

Herz did not return to Egypt after his retirement and expulsion as an enemy alien at the end of 1914 and after moving to Zurich from Milan in 1915; the brief return to Egypt the author is referring to took place *before* these dates (p. 70). The Herzes spent the summer holidays of 1914 in Italy as usual, and they were there when World War I broke out. In September Herz's beloved son, Géza, died tragically of typhoid fever in Milan, a blow from which Herz never recovered. Some earlier sources supposed that Herz did not return to Egypt after the outbreak of the war. This is not true. At the end of the summer holidays, at the end of October or at the beginning of November, Herz did in fact return to Egypt because he did not know how the new situation would affect his work and position; he was a Hungarian citizen in a country occupied by Britain. Nevertheless he must have had some evil forebodings because he returned Egypt alone leaving his family behind with the relatives of his wife in Milan, although after the death of his son Herz, who is known to have loved his family very much and to whom his family was very important, would have needed the psychological support of his wife and daughters more than ever before. His retirement was decided on November 30 and he left Egypt before the end of the year. He never returned to "his second fatherland".

The Comité extended its activities to encompass monuments of Coptic architecture in 1896, and not only in 1903 (p. 69; cf. p. 52). How far this event can be connected to the personality of Murqus Simayka Pasha, remains an open question; in any case, Simayka did not become

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<sup>2</sup> Carl König: "Heinrich von Ferstel als Lehrer," in: Heinrich Freiherr von Ferstel. Festschrift bei Gelegenheit der feierlichen Enthüllung seines Denkmals im k. k. österreichischen Museum für Kunst und Industrie. Vienna 1884. 43. Franz Freiherr von Krauss: "Die Lehrkanzel der antiken und der Renaissancebaukunst," in: Hofrat Prof. Dr. Joseph Neuwirth (ed.): Die k. k. Technische Hochschule in Wien 1815-1915. Gedenkschrift herausgegeben vom Professorenkollegium. Vienna 1915. 527. Markus Kristan: Carl König 1841-1915. Ein neubarocker Grossstadtarchitekt in Wien. (Wiener Persönlichkeiten, 1). Vienna 1999. 133.

<sup>3</sup> Donald Malcolm Reid: "Cultural imperialism and nationalism: the struggle to define and control the heritage of Arab art in Egypt." International Journal of Middle East Studies XXIV (1992) 63. It has been corrected in Reid's recent comprehensive treatment of the subject. See *Id.*: *Whose Pharaohs? Archaeology, museums, and Egyptian national identity from Napoleon to World War I.* Berkeley - Los Angeles - London. 2002. 213-257, 354 (note 57). The author of these lines hopes to publish a review of Reid's book in the near future.

a member of the Comité until 1906. It cannot be discounted that Simayka, who was an influential factor, was very active behind the scenes, thereby exercising an invisible influence on decisions; this is in fact what he is suggesting in the relevant passages of his unpublished memoirs. However, the exact extent of his influence remains unclear. While there can be no doubt that in general the high standard of the preservation and conservation of Coptic monuments, as well as the flourishing of the Coptic Museum, are forever closely connected to his name as far as later years are concerned, the strictly verifiable facts for the early period of the preservation of Coptic monuments as well as the foundation of the Coptic Museum do not seem to show any connection to him, indeed the foundation of the Coptic Museum was evidently Herz Pasha's idea, in contradistinction to what was later said.

Speiser politely rejects Reid's allegation that Herz, as an exponent of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was keen on preventing the rise of Egyptians, especially that of 'Alī Bahgat, arguing that the conflict between Herz and Bahgat was more of a personal nature (p. 94)<sup>4</sup>. I am convinced he is right. It is true that Herz was a proud Hungarian and similarly a proud Austro-Hungarian, but his work in the Technical Bureau of the Waqf Administration, the Comité and the Arab Museum cannot be regarded as the result of conscious Austro-Hungarian imperialistic aspirations: after all, it was by mere chance that Herz came to Egypt and then again it was by mere chance again that he met Franz Pasha and accepted his offer to join the Technical Bureau. No doubt later on Austria-Hungary was proud of her son's achievements, but nothing that is known about Herz's activities supports the allegation referred to. As far as his conflict with 'Alī Bahgat is concerned, the following can be known. Already as a subordinate official in the Technical Bureau of the Waqf Administration, Herz participated in the works of the Arab Museum (the present-day Museum of Islamic Arts). In 1887 Franz Pasha retired from the Waqf Administration and the Comité but remained by his title, nominally, the conservator (director) of the Museum. At the same time he could not have fulfilled the duty of conservator properly, even if he had wanted to, because he spent most of the year in Europe. However, more and more complaints were raised concerning the rapidly declining standard of work in the Museum, and so the Comité came under pressure to solve the situation<sup>5</sup>. Finally a decision was arrived at: it charged its chief architect, Herz, with the direction and supervision of the Museum in its session of 20 April 1892, without, however, officially nominating him director. So work was carried on for years. Then all of a sudden, at the beginning of 1900, 'Alī Bahgat, chief interpreter in the Ministry of Public Instruction, was transferred to the Museum by two high protectors, Ḥusayn Fahrī Pasha and Ya'qūb Artīn Pasha, after his position in the ministry had become intolerable because of personal conflicts with British Under Secretary Douglas Dunlop. The two protectors wanted to nominate him director of the Museum right away, a post to which his earlier experience at the French Archeological Institute may have entitled him. Herz however insisted that if a post of director was to be created at the Museum at all, then he himself should fill it, because he had in effect been in charge of the Museum for eight years. (This latter fact is tacitly left unmentioned by Reid.) Herz may have felt gravely offended by the procedure of Ḥusayn

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Reid: Cultural imperialism..., 67.

<sup>5</sup> Achille Patricolo: La conservation des monuments arabes en Égypte. Cairo 1914. 18.

Fahrī Pasha and Yaḳūb Artīn Pasha, who, like a bolt from the blue, wanted to instal an outsider who had had absolutely nothing to do with the Museum before, thereby neglecting Herz's dedicated work and achievements of nearly a decade. It must be mentioned in this context that at the birth of the institutionalized movement of the preservation of monuments of architecture in the 19th century in Europe, the posts of the heads of the national preservation bodies were always filled by the directors of national museums. (It was only later that it was deemed desirable to separate the two posts, as happened also in Egypt after Herz Pasha's retirement.) In the present case, Herz may also have deemed it desirable that the post of the director of the Museum be filled by the chief architect of the Comité – independently of his own person – because the Museum was in fact an ancillary institution of the Comité organically involved in its activities, as had been declared in the viceregal *decreto* of 1881 ordering the foundation of the Comité: objects from monuments which were undergoing restoration or preservation work were deposited in the Museum and also objects deposited in the Museum or their copies were returned to monuments looked after by the Comité. (The Museum had been originally founded much earlier with the aim of halting the large-scale illegal export of *objets d'art* to Europe.) In the end Herz's standpoint prevailed. I think that in view of these facts it is clear that the conflict between Herz Pasha and ʿAlī Bey Bahgat was of a professional and personal nature, and it is wholly unfounded to see Herz at work as the tool of Austro-Hungarian imperialistic aspirations, trying jealously to suppress the rise of native specialists<sup>6</sup>.

In connection with the foundation of the Comité, Speiser mentions a document in the "Archives of the Citadel", a memorandum in French, submitted to the Viceroy in 1881 by representatives of al-Azhar and the Waqf Administration, in which they demanded the foundation of an institution after the model of the "Commission des Monuments Historiques" in France for the protection of monuments of Arab art in Egypt (p. 49)<sup>7</sup>. In a quotation adduced by Speiser the importance of the revival of Arab architecture, instead of foolishly imitating Western art, is also emphasized (p. 49, note 136). Speiser adds that it is not clear how far Europeans participated in the composition of the memorandum. Now, the major part – not all, though – of the quotation Speiser adduces from it in note 136 on page 49 can be found, word for word, in an important article by Gabriel Charmes on Arab art in Egypt published at the beginning of August 1881, in which he deals *in extenso* with the necessity of founding an institution for the protection of monuments of Arab art in Egypt after the model of the French "Commission", giving a detailed description of the main tasks and activities of the future Egyptian institution as well as adding important remarks on its financing<sup>8</sup>. In view

<sup>6</sup> See also Ormos: Max Herz..., 167 (note 20).

<sup>7</sup> "Archiv der Zitadelle, ʿAbdīn, al-Qaf, Box 163." It is not clear what Archives exactly this is referring to. To my knowledge, in the Citadel there are only certain parts of the Archives of the Supreme Council of Antiquities. There are State Archives *below* the Citadel, the so-called *Dār al-Mahfūzāt*. On the other hand, the ʿAbdīn fund mentioned in this reference is to my knowledge kept in the National Archives located on the Corniche of the Nile in Būlāq.

<sup>8</sup> Gabriel Charmes: "L'art arabe au Caire, I." Journal des Débats du 2 août 1881. This first instalment was followed by two others on the subsequent days.

of this fact there can be no doubt that Charmes did at least participate in the drafting of this memorandum; indeed the possibility cannot be excluded that he wrote it in its entirety and then submitted it to friendly-minded colleagues asking for their support and signatures. It would be interesting to find out how far local Egyptians participated in this undertaking. In general, the idea of professors of al-Azhar and officials in the Waqf Administration submitting a French memorandum to the Khedive on the importance of the revival of Arab architecture – and that at the time of the ‘Urābī-revolt – is at first glance rather strange, though of course cannot be discounted right away. On the other hand, what can be known of this document from Speiser’s work is so much in line with contemporary Western ideas, and especially with the general tenor of Charmes’s article referred to above, that it is probable that he was the author, or at least one of the authors. In any case, this document deserves further study; the possibility that certain local circles did in fact expressly favour such a development is worth a special investigation<sup>9</sup>.

Speiser mentions that in 1887 two minarets collapsed in the city centre causing several casualties. This event induced the Comité immediately to demolish five other minarets in order to avoid further casualties, and in the hope that they could be restored at a later date (p. 68). However, under the reference given by Speiser, one can read that one minaret fell in 1882 and another in 1884; there is no reference to casualties, and the demolition of the five other minarets does not seem to bear any relation to the collapse of the two minarets several years earlier. The fate of minarets is highly interesting in general because of their conspicuousness and their impact on the landscape of the Well-Protected City. It is known that the fragile minarets of the late Mamlūk era suffered a lot, especially in the 19th century, from negligence and the lack of funds, and in general were in a rather bad state. The Tanzīm Department insisted on the demolition of unstable minarets because they presented a menace to public safety, while the Comité was of the opinion that unstable minarets were ugly and insisted on their restoration. Quite a few were then restored but it is not always clear what served as a model for the restoration. So every detail that can shed light on this process is important.

The number of mistakes in the transcription of Arabic words and in the Arabic forms in general is unacceptable for a scholarly work.

As far as the history of the Comité is concerned, this work will not be the last word on the subject. However, it constitutes a most important contribution to the investigation of this special field and the history of Arab architecture in Egypt in general. Perhaps the publisher could be persuaded to bring out an English translation because in its present German version this work will not be accessible to the overwhelming majority of the ever growing number of scholars and students interested in the subject.

István Ormos

<sup>9</sup> On a similar document cf. *Mercedes Volait*: “Amateurs français et dynamique patrimoniale : aux origines du Comité de conservation des monuments de l’art arabe.” *La France & l’Égypte à l’époque des vice-rois 1805-1882*. *Cahier des Annales islamologiques* 22 (2002) 320-322.