

HIDDEN ISLAMIC MOTIVES. ORIENTALISING TENDENCIES IN HUNGARIAN TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY ARCHITECTURE – THE CASE OF ALADÁR ÁRKAY

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Abstract: *Orientalism is deeply rooted in Hungarian culture. Important components of this are the one-and-half century Turkish rule, the eastern cultural and anthropological threads of the Hungarian nation, peaking in various elements of the Hungarian language and folk music, the appearance of the Turanian idea, and the specific interpretation of the Russo-Turkish War in Hungary. Artistic tendencies permeating from Western and Central European countries fostered interests for things deemed oriental. Orientalism first appears in the architecture of historic Hungary in the framework of 19th century romantic historicism. Ödön Lechner aimed at creating Hungarian national architecture, of which orientalism was an important constituent vis-à-vis traditional Western historicism. One of the means of showing the Eastern origin of the Hungarians was accentuated by using oriental forms in a quite Western manner. As witnessed by the villa designed for Hermann Babocsay, architect Aladár Árkay (1868 – 1932) was a follower of this endeavour. However, in Árkay's later work, Orientalism became veiled. For the competition of the Buda Synagogue in 1912, the connection of the dome crowning the building with the body supporting it refers to the courtyard building of the Ahmed Ibn Tulun Mosque in Cairo. But in the Calvinist Church in Városligeti (Park) Avenue in Budapest, the main mass of the edifice hides the dome recalling early Islamic architecture. Here the connection between the central space and the dome is less organic, as it lacks pendentives. This peculiarity of the early domed Islamic buildings, and the squinches in particular, correspond with the worldview of Islam. Unlike Christianity, there is no such representative hierarchy neither in Islam, nor in the organization of mosques.*

Keywords: *Islamic architecture, Turanian movement, Ödön Lechner, dome, eivan Ctesiphon, Mughal architecture, Mimar Sinan's architecture, Aladár Árkay, Calvinist Church in Városligeti Avenue, Art Nouveau, Art Deco*

1. THE SPECIFIC NATURE OF ORIENTALISM IN HUNGARY

In Hungary, Orientalism surfaces recurrently along different agendas, accompanying the last few centuries of the country's basically Christian, Central European history. Orientalism highlights an interest in Eastern cultures, based on the supposed eastern origin of Hungarians and manifests itself in borrowing thought, form and surface from Islamic architecture. Due to the country's history, the reference of Orientalism is different in Hungary than in the case of colonial empires, where in addition to sincere interest and cultural borrowing, there were also political intentions.[2]

During the 19th century, the intensification of national aspirations in Europe enlivened the research of the origins of the Hungarians, resulting in a peculiar Hungarian phenomenon, the Turanian idea, which almost became an obsession. And since both the theory of Turko-Turanian origin and the Finno-Ugric descent directed attention to the East, towards Asia, interestingly enough, they coexisted in the sometimes less, sometimes more scientifically founded movements.[3] However, in addition to this main line, there were several connections with the broad concept of Orientalism. How broad it was, it is also indicated by the slogan of the Turanian movement "from Devín (then Dévény) to Tokyo", including the Moorish cultures of Iberia and Morocco, African tribal cultures, the Islamic Middle East, Mesopotamia, India, the steppes of Inner Asia, Tibet and the Far East. Moreover, the culture of pre-Islamic Byzantium can also be cited here. It is difficult to present this broad cultural concept. This is not the aim of this study, rather to enlighten certain phenomena of Hungarian orientalism.

An important part of this thinking is how the architecture of synagogues was articulated by mid-nineteenth-century that took Byzantine-Islamic motifs in terms of treating surfaces, ornamentation, covering up supporting structures, and in the use of flat, geometrical ornament, which is treated like calligraphy.[4] At the beginning of the nineteenth-

century, in the period of naïve historicization, synagogue buildings did not necessarily referred to particular sources from the East, but just cherry-picked some oriental elements, inspired by earlier orientalising buildings as a model. This type of composite cross-reference could be easily exemplified by the Royal Pavilion in Brighton, designed by John Nash. Mature Historicism has become more conscious in borrowing from the East, focusing on specific patterns from famous edifices, such as the Lion and Myrtle Court of the Alhambra, based on Robert Owen's aforementioned book[5]. This awareness then remains characteristic of the period of the late or style-mixing historicism.

2. THE EXAMPLE OF THE ARCHITECT ALADÁR ÁRKAY

A significant Hungarian example of mature historicism is the second great synagogue of Pest in Rumbach Street (1871–72). Otto Wagner's creative partner was Mór Kallina, the contractor of the synagogue, who settled in what was then Pest-Buda for this work, and soon became one of the most sought-after masters of the historicist-neo-renaissance architecture of the Hungarian capital after the Austro-Hungarian Agreement [6]. Mór Kallina's daughter was married to architect Aladár Árkay. This startling family relationship became a decisive link to the orientalising motifs of Aladár Árkay's work.

At the beginning, two important circumstances should be mentioned. First, the rise of Árkay's career may be dated to exactly the turn of the century, when the progressive phenomenon that kept architecture in a fever was the architecture of Ödön Lechner, which was adored by a wide group of young architects, although it was partly rejected by the official cultural policy. The eastern attraction of Lechner's architecture is well-known, and he used his means to create an admittedly original national architecture [7]. Second, an important factor shedding new light on Árkay's orientalising efforts is that he did not obtain a degree in architecture and had part in a perfunctory architectural education [8]. However, his talent for visuality was evident at an early age. He also designed in the locksmith's workshop of his father, Sándor Árkay, and then apprenticed to then-contemporary renowned architects. Absorbing the historicizing spirit of the age, he was able to soar freely from the shackles of academic education, he wandered from style to style, and experienced a host of different forms..

Oriental motives can also be found in one of his first independent works. The Babocsay villa stands on the corner of today's Dózsa György Road and Andrássy Avenue (today the Embassy of Republic of Serbia, it was significantly simplified between the two world wars). Its Lechnerian, oriental architecture is only evidenced by the neighbouring Babocsai tenement, also designed by Árkay. On the northern façade of the villa there was an orientalising Andalusian loggia with openwork stone latticed arches. Árkay was neither part of the enthusiastic circle following Lechner, nor of the group of the “Young Ones” (Fiatalok) gathered around Károly Kós [9], due perhaps to his lack of a degree in architecture. This fact may have been frustrating; he may have encountered rejection, but in any case, he was obviously influenced by the art of Lechner and Kós.

Árkay also worked with his brother-in-law, Géza Kallina, at the same time. An important and interesting work dates from this period, the design of the villa made for Mrs. Ferenc Török in Városmajor Street, which expands the original neo-classicist villa designed by József Hild in a very inventive way. It is a very multi-faceted house, but we are now primarily interested in its orientalising details.

In the 18th century, a series of thematic rooms became widespread in Hungarian and European castles and later villas. One of these characteristic forms is also related to orientalism, the tent room, which creates a space for men to smoke pipes, evoking the atmosphere of a Turkish military tent.[10] Later, art collecting necessitated thematic rooms, for instance Gothic and Renaissance halls, etc. The recently reconstructed Stephen's Hall at the Royal Palace in Buda represents a good example of this trend, but similar spaces existed in a villa on Bécsi kapu Square, destroyed during World War Two [11].

In the house of Mrs. Ferenc Török's [12], there is an interesting room on the ground floor of the garden wing, which has oriental interior decoration, including the framing of the door leading to the balcony, which is decorated with stuccos in the Andaluz Mudejar or, to use an archaic term, Moorish style. However, the most interesting element of the room is the ceiling, which is a so-called Artesonado work, a painted wood structure covering. The profiled and colourfully painted slats on the base of the ceiling show octagonal and eight-pointed star motifs; octagram, Rub el Hizb, one of the characteristics of Islamic woodwork. Woodworking draws on a long Islamic and pre-Islamic tradition of Levantine[13] culture. Certainly, in the climatic conditions of the Islamic/Mediterranean culture, good timber could have been of greater value, and on the other hand, it was also a durable building material due to local climatic conditions.

It is worth raising a few questions regarding the role of colourful woodwork in Árkay's oeuvre, which refers to orientalism. The popular structure of Andalusian-Moroccan Islamic architecture, the artesonado, was mentioned in connection to the house of Mrs. Ferenc Török at 41 Városmajor Street. However, the artesonado not only has a planar appearance in these Islamic lands, but also three-dimensional shapes were built from painted fine carpentry structures.[14] There are two forms of spatial shapes. On the one hand, it is a structure reminiscent of a centralizing

dome or an actual dome, the support of which, as explained earlier in this study is structurally inorganic, not cellular or bubble-like, not freely flowing, based on squinches and not pendentives. Other examples of artesonado show a turtle-like geometry, supplemented by a trapezoidal cross-section, a connecting beam-like element.

In addition to the above, almost direct formal analogies – certainly in the case of the house of Mrs. Ferenc Török – a much more concealed orientalised also appears in Árkay's works. Interestingly, this shows up relatively early, in the most important middle period of his oeuvre. The most significant work of this period is the Calvinist Church in the Városligeti Fásor (Városliget Park Avenue, resembling the German Stadthain meaning actually “City Grove”) in Budapest.

The building is the second Calvinist church in Pest.[15] At that time, the Reformed Church had not yet found its appropriate form of architectural expression in an urban context. As a possible answer, Aladár Árkay took as a point of reference the architecture of the sacral buildings of the Jews, the synagogues, which were also treated similarly to the Reformed churches in the era, but were at home in an urban environment. This can be clearly perceived if we compare the Church in the Városligeti Allée with Árkay's plan for the Buda Synagogue competition. The competition plan and the means of expression of the interior of the church are very similar. By the way, the characteristics of the square are also characteristic of synagogues, the large-scale space surrounded by galleries. Such a space is realised in the synagogue of Subotica (1901-3, architects: Marcell Komor and Dezső Jakab), based on German analogies in terms of composition of space and masses. [16]

It may be stated that the Reformed church in Városligeti Allée differs from the traditional, appearance of this genre. Of course, it is not alone among the churches that were seeking new paths of design [17], but the path chosen by Árkay is very characteristic. From the outside, the influence of Finnish national romanticism is perhaps the most striking, and this source is even more decisive than in the case of Kós's Parish Church of Our Lady of the Snows in Zebegény. And this exterior does not refer to the interior at all. In fact, it hides the characteristic of the interior. In contrast, in the competition for the Buda Synagogue the interior of the house of prayer is projected onto the external form, dominated by the hemisphere of the dome.

Hiding the dome seems justified. Perhaps Árkay also realised that the exterior of the dome would make the building look too oriental for Calvinism that dogmatically has little in common with Islam and its various forms. [18] Moreover, the second great “schism”, the one between Catholicism and Protestantism, distanced Calvinists even farther from the East. That is why the character of the interior space is unusual. The spatial composition is Byzantine, with a Greek cross floor plan. The character of the ground floor is determined by the resemblance to the interior of the Pauluskirche (1898-1901, Paul Church) in Basel, designed by Karl Moser and Robert Curjel [19]. On the first floor, the central character, the mighty galleries and the organ loft strengthen the “synagogue character.” However, the covering of space again reveals a different disposition. The dome does not sit on pendentives, but directly on the round opening of the reinforced concrete ceiling. Near the corner of this ceiling sections Islamic-style, octagonal lighting fixtures and copper chandeliers hang. The origin of suspended lanterns certainly leads to Byzantium. However, it is not only the chandeliers that give the Islamic character of this upper space zone, but more the abrupt change in the connection between the square and the dome, a connection fundamentally different from the structure of Christian domes resting on pendentives.

I argue, that the dome loaded on pendentives means a hierarchical structural approach. Each spatial layer has a separate role in holding the dome (and then the top motif is often repeated in the lantern). This structural hierarchy models the structure of the Christian Church, the totality of all canonized saints and angels on which the Holy Trinity rests. This structural-form-spatial hierarchy required the subsequent ideologization of the Ottoman mosques, which was brought about by Islamic angeology after the Hagia Sophia became the model for the great Turkish mosques [20]. This contrasts to the spatial concept and philosophy of the Arab and Persian mosques, which were not influenced by Christianity. For European Orientalism, all three sources are crucial. The structure of the secular Church is a parallel representation of this structure with the canons, bishops, archbishops and the Pope. Although protestant churches, especially Calvinists are also less hierarchical than other Christian congregants' and the idea of a non-hierarchical dome would fit this worldview, according to the data we can ponder, Árkay's choice was simply facilitated by his existing design idea for the Great Buda Synagogue and probably had no particular view on Calvinism itself.

In the Islamic cosmology, following Judaism, there is a stronger separation between the divine and the mundane. Allah hovers over the earth as an unapproachable power. Therefore, the dome symbolizing it cannot be structurally connected to the structure that carries it, to the perimeter walls of the space. The mosque in Medina had no covering, the courtyard was surrounded by a covered colonnade. The cupola of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, Qubbat es Sakhra (692 A.D.); on Haram al-Sharif sits above a central square surrounded by a circular passage covered with a flat wooden ceiling. At the cupolas of the domed spaces of the Aswan Fatimid Cemetery, the transition between the circular dome and square floor plan is resolved by a flat stone slab. Its geometry is similar to Árkay's solution. This

is just a pure geometry because the placement of the openings of the dome's drum relieves these triangular stone slabs from load-bearing.



Figure 1. Dome in Fatimid Cemetery Aswan (photo: Zsolt Vasáros)

An important characteristic of the examined domes inspired by Islamic architecture is therefore their relationship to the basic mass composition of the building, which is much more functional or to be precise, more objective, and lacks the structural hierarchy built up in the lower layers of the space. The dome is, almost directly attached to the lower space, suddenly, unexpectedly connected to it. This character is usually also reflected in the exterior. The lower masses hold the dome without much solemnity. Usually, the dome is not optically enhanced [21] either, in order to let dominate the masses below, crowning the building. In the case of the trumpet vault of Sassanid origin, the transition between the two spaces - the terrestrial square and the celestial spherical – is structural, while the pendentives already spiritually formulate the organic character of this relationship. The spiritual content and meaning of the domes are as different in the two Abrahamic religions as the Christian semicircular shrine differs from the Islamic mihrab niche.

The Ottoman Turkish Mimar Sinan overcame this difference in the 16th century and built a mosque with a Byzantine dome on the model of Hagia Sophia. However, according to some sources, he came from an Armenian, Christian family. As a result, the Byzantine square, which no longer only took over the dome, spread and became characteristic in other parts of the Ottoman Empire as well. A well-known example is the Muhamed Ali Mosque in Cairo.

The three characteristics of Sinan's domes met the Islamic idea of the dome, and therefore the space defined by the mighty belt arches also became accepted.

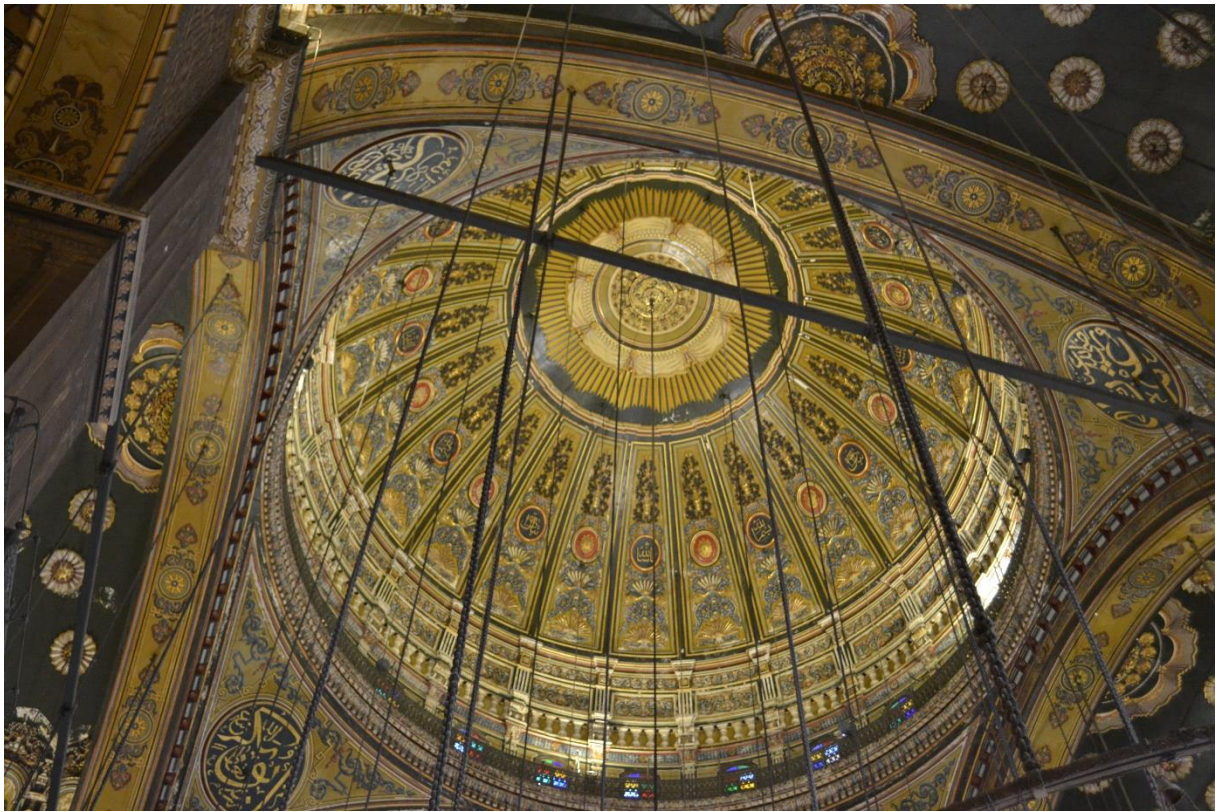


Figure 2. Mosque of Muhammad Ali, dome, Cairo (author's photo)

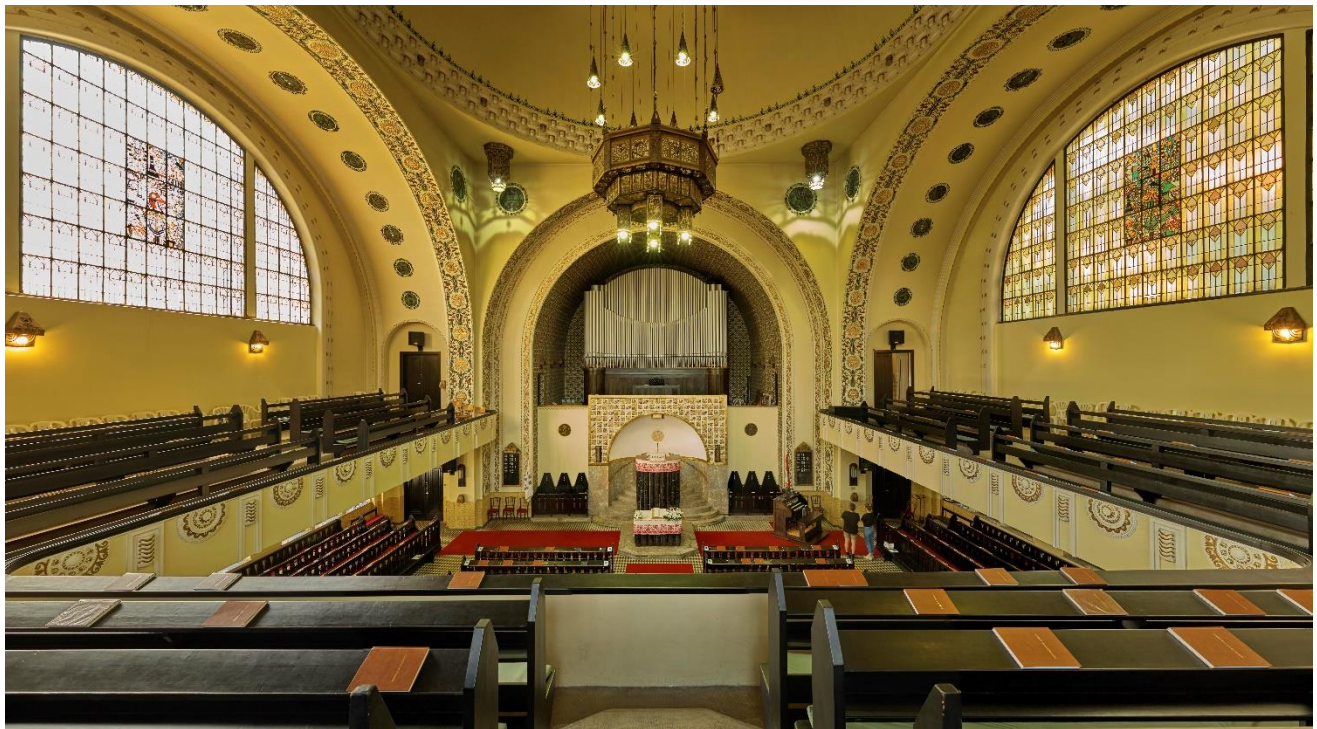


Figure 3. Fasori Reformed Church, interior with the dome, Budapest (photo: Rudolf Klein)

It should be noted that in addition to the chandeliers, the interior of Árkay's church seems oriental at first glance due to the mighty strap arches. This is reinforced by three further characteristics:

- (1) the string of pearl-like windows above the shoulder-line of the dome;

(2) the lack of a lantern;

(3) the objective, undistorted appearance of the dome in the composition of masses.

János Gerle has already [22] pointed out that Árkay draws on the works of architects Karl Moser and Robert Curjel as an analogy to the entrance [23], and he was certainly familiar with the main entrance of Sankt Anton in Zurich (1907). The pulpit repeats the solution of the Pauluskirche in Basel designed by Curjel and Moser, already quoted above. A pair of arched staircases lead up to the space covered by a gilded half-dome, a semicircular sanctuary, running up to the pulpit in focus of the interior space.

I have already mentioned the presumably direct antecedent of the entrance to the church in Városligeti Allee. But taking over the motif is not a simple copy. The sources of Curjel and Moser would be worth examining. One analogy is the model of Romanesque church gates in Provence. However, these gates have a much finer structure, Romanesque patterns figured as obvious templates. The evoking of the Provençal gate motif was the result of Karl Moser's admiration for Henry Hobson Richardson, who also had a predilection towards Provençal Romanesque [24].

Still, the monumentality of the gate in Árkay's church is much more Mesopotamian. In the second half of the 19th century, archaeological research in Mesopotamia and the Middle East as well as in Egypt has begun. The results of this were also published in German Lands, as German archaeologists also participated in these researches; they were also involved in museum constructions in Berlin. The Pergamon Museum opened in 1905. Among the imposing monuments of Pergamon we can find the part of the courtyard façade of the Ishtar Gate and a Parthian palace. This gate is related to the main façade of the palace of Ctesiphon. These gate-like facades may have filtered through into European, specifically German architecture. The monumental ruins of the 3rd century Persian-Sassanid palace in Ctesiphon were already known at this time, at the turn of the century, although its archaeological research was not carried out until 1924.

The centre of the horizontal mass is broken through by a mighty, parabolic arched gate – considered to be the precursor of the Persian eivan. On the surface framing the gate, a mesh, column-beamed façade division appears, with openings in the ground floor strip and smaller gates between the columns. The gates of Curjel and Moser have a semicircular arch belt, and their shoulder line is a prominent element like the Ishtar gate. The gate in the Városligeti Park Avenue, on the other hand, similarly to Ctesiphon, has a parabolic arch. However, the surface above the ground floor colonnade of both gates is decorated with a square mesh pattern. The church in Bern is covered with simpler, cassette-like elements, while the church in the Városligeti Park Avenue is covered with a continuous pattern of glazed ceramic elements. In any case, although they differ from the mesh, column-beam division used is on the upper levels of the Mesopotamian gates. I presume that the Mesopotamian patterns may have played a role in shaping the church gates.



Figure 4. Fasori Reformed Church, entrance gate, Budapest (photo: Rudolf Klein)

The 1920s were the era of architecture in Hungary that woke up from a deep crisis. This period introduced new ways of orientalising. Three important monuments from Aladár Árkay's works stand out here: the Town Hall of Mohács, the Christ the King Church or Rákócziánium Chapel in Keleti Károly Street and the first small Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish church in Városmajor, both churches in Budapest.



Figure 5. City Hall, Mohács (photo: Rudolf Klein)

The mass composition of the town hall of Mohács shows also orientalism, a corner pavilion crowned with a dome on both sides of the central projection. An interesting, early Baroque characteristic is that Árkay placed two asymmetrically positioned functions in the symmetrical building, the town hall and the post office. The construction of the building was close to the 400th anniversary of the Battle of Mohács in 1526, which is why the oriental-Islamic character of the building seems bizarre. Of course, there could also have been political reasons for this, after establishing the diplomatic relationship between Hungarian Kingdom and the newly founded Republic of Turkey headed by Kemal Atatürk. In addition to the mass formation, the loggia of the central projection and the interior design of the ceremonial hall behind it carry oriental, Mudejar-Castilian motifs. The ceiling of the ceremonial hall is a trough (symmetrical trapezoid, modelled on the artesonado) cross-section, colourful, red, blue and gold painted woodwork, with a zigzag motif. Parallel to that, in some other details of the town hall, we can also discover the motifs of German expressionism and East Central European art deco reflecting a provincial but authentic form of Baroque, in some places with Far Eastern (Chinese) patterns. Árkay's diversity of motives evokes a kind of stylistic parade here.

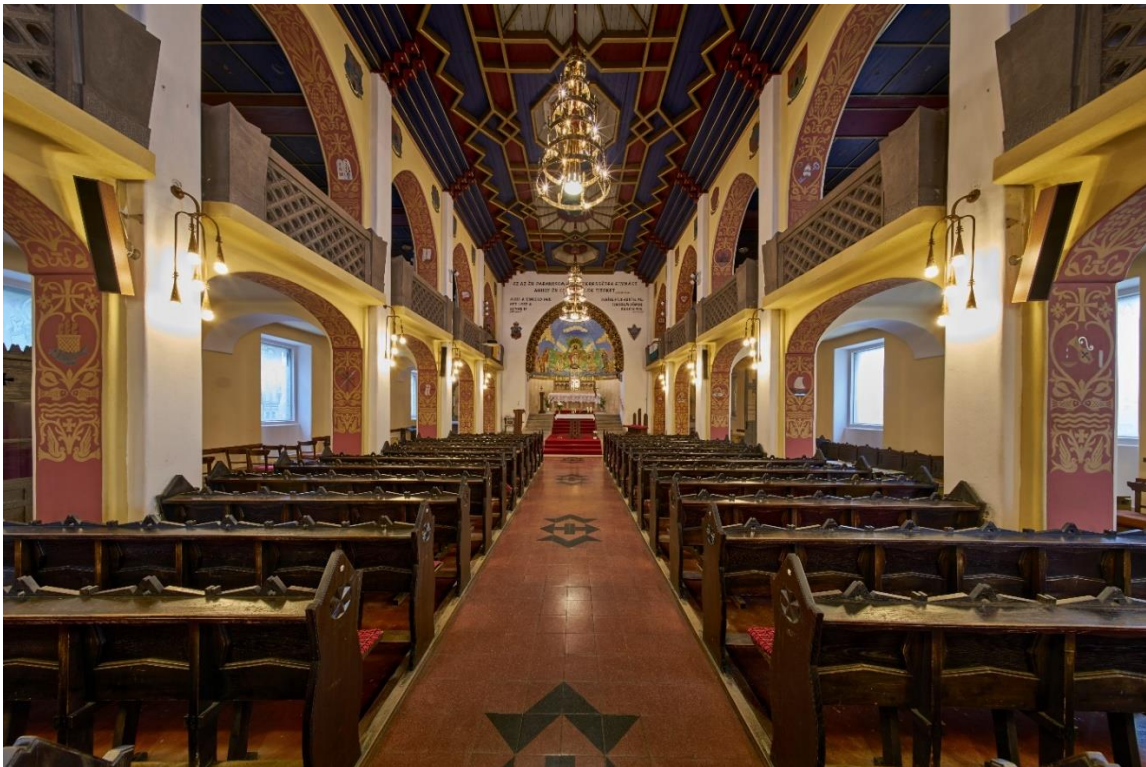


Figure 6. Christ the King Chapel, interior, Budapest (photo: Rudolf Klein)

It is intriguing, which hidden references Árkay's church interiors in Buda contain, almost in the same period. From the outside, these buildings do not hint at such a surprising design of the interior. The interior of the Christ the King Chapel comprises a nave plus two isles arrangement; the aisles are topped by a gallery throughout. This unusual structure justifies itself by the large capacity for the classes of the Rákóczi Grammar School. The nave's ceiling features a colourful woodwork, artesonado-like; the chandeliers are less oriental than in the case of the church on Városligeti Avenue. The decoration of the intradosa of the arcus triumphalis, painted in gold, refers to Mudejar. The marble cladding of the sanctuary shows Byzantine influence. The wall-painting of the nave and aisles (although no longer the original painting), the shaping of the details the character of the Islamic pointed arches are more reminiscent of the Aqsunqur mosque (Blue Mosque) in Cairo than a Roman Catholic church. The overall picture is rather fairytale-like. Similar, interesting observations can be made in the small Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish church of Városmajor.

While the church of the Rákócziánium with its door jambs at its main gate features a medieval character from the outside, the small church of Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish church in Városmajor neighbourhood shows the character of a Transylvanian village church introduced by Károly Kós in the Parish Church of Our Lady of the Snows in Zebegény [25], with some elements of Finnish national romanticism. Aladár Árkay also had plans of this kind as confirmed by his son Bertalan [26]. However, the interior differs from the design suggested by the exterior. The interior also features a nave-plus-two-aisles arrangement, with lower aisles. The aisles turn in like a deambulatory on the side facing the sanctuary, but they break off at the sanctuary. The space of the nave is covered with a plastered wooden structure, the cross-section of which follows the outer roof shape, but with a lower sloping gable roof, hipped over the sanctuary. The similarly articulated covering of the sanctuary appears on the roof-level as a ridge. Originally, Árkay also designed illumination openings, but these were eventually omitted. In my view, this plastered structure has a unique characteristic, that above the aisles, the plane of this gable-roof-like ceiling bends vertically. This rounding up on the plan is much larger in radius, which makes the vault character stronger. However, the finished structure with this slight rounding is more like a tent. This tent-like character (Tent of the Wilderness) was certainly strengthened by the original textile-like decorative painting.

With the original rounding, the cross section shows an Islamic pointed arch, which also appears in Finnish national romanticism, as on some of Eliel Saarinen's plans. [27] An interesting detail is that in 1925, Árkay proposed a transept and a Mughal-style Islamic pointed arched quadrangle dome for the expansion of the small church. This plan was finally overruled and instead the new large Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish church emerged in Italianate-German hybrid form of modernism.

Returning to the nave, one notices the lack of clerestory. Rustic, cylindrical columns without capitals separate the nave from the aisles. Above the columns there is a low but wide beam, in fact a reinforced concrete slab, which is also the ceiling of the aisles. Between the columns, over the aforementioned ceiling Islamic arched niches feature similarly the intersecting barrels of a vault. The niches actually imitate an opening in the beams above the intercolumniatum. The relationship between architectural elements reflects Islamic architecture: the horizontal beam above the columns, the connection between the columns, the beam and the arches. Similar tectonics can be seen, for example, in the courtyard of the Al Azhar Mosque in Cairo. The analogy also exists spatially, the turning of the arcade and the opening, interrupting it in the axis is the sanctuary in the small church, and the eivan in the mosque. These similarities – according to my assumption – were not conscious on the part of the designer. I presume, Árkay was not aware of these similarities. Still, regarding certain details, we can observe conscious orientalism. The holy water basins show the influence of Mughal architecture due following Lechner's inspiration, for example in the case of the Museum of Arts and Crafts in Budapest, or the polygonal, Turkish-like timber structure of the entrance windbreak decorated with orientalising openings.



Figure 7. The small church of Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish church, interior, Budapest (photo: Rudolf Klein)

It is still of utmost importance to present the orientalising intention of the aforementioned three edifices coupled with some latent phenomena. However, it is worth mentioning that in addition to these, previously presented Islamic motifs, Árkay also resorted to decorative elements and grids of the Far East, more of a Chinese character in the 1920s. I have already referred to it at the town hall of Mohács, but these patterns appear in the vestibule of the Reformed church in Rákosszentmihály, on the terrace railing of the villa at 10 Pasaréti Road or on the parapet of the gallery of the church in Győr-Gyárvaros. Although its references to the Far East are by no means as clear for example as the fence of Sándor Simonyi-Semadam's house [28], these perforated structures could have originated from Islamic musharabia. From these, the main characteristics and sources of orientalisation in Hungary during the first half of the 20th century emerge from Árkay throughout his art.

By the end of his life, Aladár Árkay designed the Bulgarian Orthodox Church of St. Cyril and Methodius, the "Apostles to the Slavs" in Ferencváros suburb of Budapest (1931-1932), with a Latin cross floor plan. But its quadrangular space is a distinctly Byzantine, covered by a dome. The relationship between the dome and the frontal arches of the crosses recall the church on the Városligeti Avenue, built twenty years earlier, yet here the solution is less elegant.



Figure 8. Bulgarian Orthodox Church of St. Cyril and Methodius, interior, Budapest (photo: Rudolf Klein)

SUMMARY

In Hungary, following the period of rejection due to Ottoman rule, Orientalism became closely related to the supposed oriental origins of the Hungarian people. These ideas intensified in the early nineteenth century national movements. The conflict between the two principal theories of origin of Hungarians, the Finno-Ugric and the Turkish, also led to the establishment of the Turanian Society, pleading for the eastern origin.

The most characteristic manifestation of Orientalism in Hungarian architecture is associated with the oeuvre of Ödön Lechner. His Orientalism was closely linked to Mughal and Indian culture; however, he rejected the incorporation of Islamic motifs into Hungarian national architecture. Parallely, Byzantine and Islamic motifs also featured in Hungarian historicist architecture. From the perspective of Islamic elements, the oeuvre of Aladár Árkay between 1900 and 1930 is of special significance. Within his work, Islamic motifs appear in three ways.

The primary use, where the Islamic character or details alluding to Islamic art were explicitly requested or expected by patrons. Examples include the Town Hall of Mohács and the residence of Mrs. Ferenc Török.

The secondary use, where recognisable Oriental, primarily Islamic motifs are employed without apparent intellectual or conceptual connection. Such examples include a windbreak and a holy water font.

The tertiary use, where the intentionality of the applied form is not entirely clear. This category includes the use of the dome devoid of pendentives. In the Reformed Church on Budapest's Park Avenue, this may have reflected an intention to avoid a Byzantine spatial character, yet the polygonal lamps clearly convey an Islamic quality. The Islamic association of the dome without pendentives is further reinforced by the worldview of the religion itself. Islamic characteristics, however, are not confined to the dome: the interiors of two small churches built in the 1920s also point in this direction. Their spatial arrangements evoke the madrasa courtyard, the eivan, as well as the tent

motif.

Árkay's use of Oriental forms was not invariably conscious. This is evident in the portal of the Reformed Church on Park Avenue where an immediate source can be traced back, and crystallizes around Jugendstil master Karl Moser with a hint to Henry Hobson Richardson's admiration for Provençal Romanesque. Nevertheless, the adoption of the carpet-like front elevation penetrated by a parabolic arch lends the composition a distinctly Oriental, specifically Sassanian, character.

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- [8] GALL, ANTHONY JOHN (2019). *Kós Károly*. Budapest: Holnap Kiadó. p.37.
- [9] See for example: Esterházy Palace in Tata, Turkish Tent in the Vienna Arsenal. The Turkish tent appears in Polish territories, e.g. Gwoździec, and from there it bounces back into Hungarian Art Nouveau, first in the case of the synagogue in Subotica. See: Thomas Hupka, *The Resplendant Synagogue*, Rudolf Klein, *The Synagogue of Subotica*
- [10] SZABÓ, TAMÁS (2011). *Rejtőző angyal az Enyedi Zsótér család birtokában és a Szegedi Múzeum gyűjteményében - HIDDEN ANGEL*. In Tamás Szabó, & István Zombori, *GIORGIO VASARI 1511-1574 - THE PAINTER OF THE SZEGED ANNUNCIATION - A SZEGEDI ANGYALI ÜDVÖZLET FESTŐJE* (92-123 pp.). Szeged: Móra ferenc Múzeum.
- [11] The daughter of Mrs. Ferenc Török was Sarolta Török, whose husband was Dr. Tibor Gaál of Hatvan, deputy governor of Fiume Tibor Gaál of Hatvan: 1897–1901, 1901–1906,
<https://ujkor.hu/content/masodsorban-kormanyzoi-helyettesek-es-kormanyzohelyettesek-fiumeben> (downloaded: 20.08.2025)
<https://www.geni.com/people/Tibor-Ga%C3%A1l-de-Hatvan/6000000177374301854> (downloaded: 20.08.2025)
- [12] See for example: Morocco, Kiva-Uzbekistan, Berlin Pergamon Museum, Islamic Art. The tree, the Phoenician cedar, was already present 1500 years earlier, e.g. the Temple of Solomon
- [13] According to Klein Rudolf, this has a deep philosophy – The hollowed-out material, i.e. space, cannot be considered as a void, i.e. divinization – See Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic art and spirituality*, p.190
- [14] FARBAKY, PÉTER (1984). *A fasori református templom*. *Ars Hungarica*, 12. évf. 1-2. szám, 1984/2, pp. 317-404.
- [15] For example, Gottfried Semper: *The Dresden Synagogue*, see: Klein, Rudolf: *Synagogues*, Budapest p. 62.
- [16] For example: Samu Petz, professor of medieval studies at the University of Technology
- [17] However, Luther, along with his deep anti-Semitism, returns to Jewish foundations. Gott ist Geist. Comment by Rudolf Klein.
- [18] OECHSLIN, WERNER, & HILDEBRAND, SONJA (2010). *Karl Moser - Architektur für eine neue Zeit 1880 bis 1936*. Zürich: gta Verlag. Volume 2. p. 97
- [19] See.: NASR, SEYYED HOSSEIN (1987). *Islamic art and spirituality*. New York: State University of New York Press. p. 41.
- [20] I will not discuss the domes of Mughal architecture here.
- [21] SISA, JÓZSEF., & WIEBENSON, DORA. (1998). *Magyarország építészetének története*. Budapest: Vince kiadó. p. 273.
- [22] Karlsruhe, Lutheran Church is very similar in terms of mass and tower placement. It can be assumed that Pál Tóásó also knew him.
- [23] OECHSLIN, WERNER, & HILDEBRAND, SONJA (2010). *Karl Moser - Architektur für eine neue Zeit 1880 bis 1936*. Zürich: gta Verlag. Volume 1. pp.120-122.
- [24] GALL, ANTHONY JOHN (2019). *Kós Károly*. Budapest: Holnap Kiadó. pp. 57-65
- [25] CSÁKI, TAMÁS (2001). *ÁRKAY BERTALAN PÁLYAKEZDÉSE*. p. 29
- [26] STJERNSCHANTZ, TORSTEN (1908). *A finn művészet és iparművészet*. Magyar Iparművészet, 1-27. I. melléklet. 15. kép Eliel Saarinen: A "Merijoki" villa villa ura szobája
- [27] Sándor Simonyi-Semadam, former Prime Minister, was the leader of the Japanese group of the Turan Society. The Chinese-style fence of his house was made by András Benedek in 1931. Torma, Tamás: *Egy hely...* 2016. (Blog, downloaded: 20.08.2025)