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Ludwig Förster's Dohány Temple in Pest
Moorish Cathedral for the "Asiates Of Europe"

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Fig. 1 View of the temple from the Károly Őring
This is most typical view of the temple, bearing some similarity to its original form. However, the new perpendicular cut of the left projection flanking the entrance courtyard emphasises even more the oblique character of the right projection. Förster’s vision of the synagogue in relation to its environment, i.e. the merge of the main bulk of the building within the urban fabric, becomes evident, with the two-storey-high constructions above the ground floor, but also his wish to insert the synagogue, with its tall, slim towers, into the skyline of Pest, seen from the Buda Mountains.

Sl. 1. Pogled na hram s Bulevara Károly
Ovo je najtipičniji pogled na hram koji najviše podsjeća na izvorni izgled. Nov pravokutni rez desnog rizalita koji flankira ulaz još više ističe ukosenoć desnoga. Försterov koncept sinagoge u odnosu prema gradskom kontekstu također postaje ocit: velik dio objekta utapa se visinom u gradsko tkivo s dvokatnicama oko sebe, dok se iz vizura s uzvisine Budima hram ističe svojim vitkim tornjevima.
This paper analyses the orientalising architectural language of reform synagogues in the 19th century, exemplified by the Dohány Temple (Tabak Temple or Dohány Street Synagogue) in Pest built between 1854 and 1859. The paper reflects on the cultural context of the synagogue, its style and debates in the press of the period, that praised ‘Moorish Style’, but emphasised its inferiority vis-à-vis the Gothic or ‘Germanic’, Christian idiom. The paper deals partly with similarities between the 19th century synagogue and colonial architecture. It ends with a discussion on the historic significance of this genre.
INTRODUCTION: THE BIRTH OF ORIENTAL STYLE

There are few instances in western history showing such a strong link between cultural identity and architecture as 19th century synagogues in orientalizing styles. Still, this link is far from being spontaneous and organic like the one that characterised churches and mosques before modernity. Architects of synagogues from the 1840s onwards attempted to create an architectural identity ex-nihilo in order to convey the message of their clients: emancipation, loyalty and integration into the economy and culture of the host nation states. However, the situation was more complex. 19th century synagogue architecture in Western countries represents two identity crises: the one of the reform Jews, who abandoned their traditional ways of life and found themselves in a cultural vacuum; and the one of modern European societies in the stalemate of political and cultural changes in the capitalist transition. Concomitantly, Western societies felt a fatigue about their own cultural foundations – the Jewish-Christian paradigm and Greco-Roman antiquity – and embarked on a grand cultural opening that followed colonial conquests. 19th century architects in order to overcome the intellectual fatigue, created numerous hybrids and revivals by adapting elements of alien systems: Islamic, Chinese, Japanese and other non-Western architectural/artistic heritage, at that time coherent and relatively untouched by modernity. Synagogue architecture was one of the most fertile experimental grounds for these endeavours.

Ludwig Förster’s Tabak or Dohány Tempel of Pest, called today Dohány Street Synagogue of Budapest, the largest place of Jewish worship in the world during the times of its construction – today the third – displays all aforementioned dilemmas; its design and construction attest to the period’s deliberations on how to project Jewish identity onto architecture in Central Europe and beyond. There were other pioneering synagogues in the 19th century, which displayed oriental language, first in their interior, retaining Western idiom on the exterior, like Gottfried Semper’s Dresden synagogue in 1838-40. After the revolutions of 1848, oriental styles found their way to the façades too: Viennese Tempelgasse Synagogue, 1852; synagogue in Mainz, 1853; synagogue in Leipzig, 1853; Tabak Temple 1854; synagogue in Berlin-Johaniss-Strasse, 1854; synagogue in Berlin-Oranienbergerstrasse, 1859; synagogue in Stuttgart, 1861. Oriental style1 – whatever it meant at that time – became the hallmark of Jews, the ‘Asiates of Europe’. In evoking the spirit of the Arabian Nights, the Tabak Temple remained representative in terms of size, pomp and urban prominence.

In this paper I shall investigate the creation of its synthetic identity based on the one hand on Western traditions, and on the other, the imported and transfigured oriental elements

1 This condition applied mainly to continental Europe, France, German Lands, Austria (Austria and Hungary), Scandinavia and partly to the Pale of Settlement – today Ukraine, parts of Russia, Baltic States, Poland – where just a small minority of Jews were emancipated, living a western life style. The emancipation in Holland was somehow different, as it started much earlier than elsewhere and therefore the great 19th century ‘Jewish boom’ was less visible.

2 Interestingly, Jews contributed greatly to these changes in numerous ways. Being denied property ownership in many European countries, they accumulated wealth in cash/gold that was easy to invest into capitalist economy. Historically they were also close to trade and commerce, so 19th century European changes represented a great opportunity for them to expand their economic activities. Due to frequent persecutions in pre-modern times they became an easy moving population, which usually spoke many languages and were able to integrate, albeit superficially, to any milieu. That led to a symbiotic relationship in many countries between Jews and gentiles that became more symmetrical than in previous epochs. Fredric Bedoire even relates the eclectic mentality of the 19th century to Jewish presence in many centres of continental Europe. See: Bedoire, 2004.

3 Throughout this paper I will use the term “oriental style” instead of terms such as neo-Islamic or even Moorish style, the latter used often in the 19th century, because the idiom at stake neither matches any historic style, nor their revivals. The idiom of these synagogues was a projection of the West, a manner in which Europe projected its imagination onto a supposed Orient, which never existed. This projection mixed together Arabic-Islamic, Indian and even Byzantine motives, and therefore no specific term can express its fictive and hybrid character.
for the erection of one of the most trendsetting synagogues in 19th century Europe.

CULTURAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

KULTURNO-POLITIČKI KONTEKST

It may be debated whether Jews had survived four millennia as a distinct ethnic-religious group mainly due to the hostility of the environment or their internal cohesion, but it is doubtful that after the Enlightenment both agencies began to vane, paving the way for some kind of convergence in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. However, after initial optimism, first cracks appeared soon on the newly established common Jewish-gentile platform. Still, it was sustained a century or so in continental Europe, from the 1830s to the 1930s, coincidentally with the birth of economic and cultural modernity. (Traditional or Orthodox Jews remained at all times more suspicious of this development, but with a time lag of a few decades their optimism followed suit and their synagogue architecture too, albeit without substantial changes in the religious service.) After a century, however, modern time European Jewish Renaissance was brought to an abrupt end: a major part of the Jewish population disappeared from the continent due to Nazism; a substantial proportion of Central European synagogues were destroyed during the Reichskristallnacht (November 9, 1938) and after the fall of the Iron Curtain (1989). Unlike the spectacular Nazi destruction of Synagogues in 1938, the Communist regimes were not openly hostile to Jews, but their opposition to traditions and religion resulted in the destruction of a great number of synagogues in Central Europe, particularly in settlements where Jews population had disappeared.5

At the onset of modern Jewish Renaissance some emancipated Jews did not consider Christianity as Jewish apostasy any more, but rather the universal religion, or better still, a cultural common denominator of the ‘civilised world’ as they put it, i.e. Western societies. For the secularly educated Jews the hustle and bustle of the Gründerzeit seemed to herald the commencement of Messianic times, prompting them to give up their religious/cultural particularity, including the strife to return to the Land of Israel. Post-Enlightenment secularism and universalism moved away the upper strata of Jews from their traditions and initiated their economic, cultural and to some extent political integration into European and North American societies. Indigenous middle class gentiles were not always pleased with the Jewish advance, fearing competition. In Central Europe middle class gentiles tried to delay emancipation as long as possible, but the need for financial capital, that some Jews were ready to deliver, proved to be stronger. Even after formal emancipation was achieved in the 1860s, middle class gentiles still attempted to keep Jews away from culture and politics. This explains why synagogues were built in a style that sharply differentiated them from the majority of the urban fabric, visually distinguishing Jews from gentiles until the end of the 19th century. But due to leaving the Ghetto behind, synagogue architecture was destined to change in any case. Inconspicuous appearance as a consequence of Jewish indifference to the visual and the absence of the need for social manifestation were abandoned soon in favour of visual integration and land-marking in the gentle urban fabric. Architectural integration was gradual, its first stage was just characterised by taking on a visual identity readable in Christian terms, acquiring cultural distinction from the mainstream Western societies, expressed in the slogan ‘Jews, the Asiates of Europe’.6 Later, after the fashion of oriental style abated, from about the 1880s, synagogues acquired more and more leading ‘Christian styles’ – neo-Romanesque, neo-Byzantine, sometimes even neo-Gothic, particularly in Germany.7

4 It is estimated that some six million Jews have lost their lives and although the accuracy of this number is being challenged by some, it is clear that Jewish life in Europe has changed forever due to Nazism; the majority of Jews live today outside Europe. Apparently, their disappearance from Europe between 1933 and 1945 – either due to murder or emigration – anticipated the later scientific and economic weakening of this continent vis-à-vis any case. Inconspicuous appearance as a consequence of Jewish indifference to the visual and the absence of the need for social manifestation were abandoned soon in favour of visual integration and land-marking in the gentle urban fabric. Architectural integration was gradual, its first stage was just characterised by taking on a visual identity readable in Christian terms, acquiring cultural distinction from the mainstream Western societies, expressed in the slogan ‘Jews, the Asiates of Europe’.6 Later, after the fashion of oriental style abated, from about the 1880s, synagogues acquired more and more leading ‘Christian styles’ – neo-Romanesque, neo-Byzantine, sometimes even neo-Gothic, particularly in Germany.7

5 Communist Anti-Semitism was disguised as Anti-Zionism or hatred towards the rich bourgeois Jews.

6 Minor oriental features also appeared sporadically on numerous synagogues prior to emancipation as for instance the Großenhof synagogue in Prague (1760) and in German lands as well: Ingelheim (1832), Kirchheim-Bolan- den and Binswangen (1835), Speyer (1837), and Heiden- heim (1849) See: HAMMER-SCHENK, 1981, images 182-185. However, these synagogues were not full-fledged Oriental-style buildings with rich surface decoration, but displayed only some minor Moorish details such as horse-shoe arches, for instance. Their scale also did not differ from that of other modest period synagogues.

7 Architect and theoretician Edwin Oppler argued, if German Jews were ethnic Germans, oriental style was not justified. Therefore he advocated the use of ‘German historic styles’, mainly Neo-Romanesque, that was the most German and supposedly less linked to Christianity than Gothic. Gothic in the 19th century represented the par excellence ‘Christian style.’ Even before him, Abraham (Al- brecht) Rosengarten (1809-93), the Jewish architect of the Hauptsynagoge in Kassel also stressed the European identity of Jews, opposing oriental style and advocating German Rundbogenstil, a special neo-Romanesque idiom, among others in the Viennese Allgemeine Bauzeitung in numerous instances.

FIG. 2 Site plan of the synagogue around 1900
The plan represents the situation similar to the one at the time of construction, exhibiting the crowded conditions characteristic of former ghettos or Jewish quarters, albeit there was no real ghetto in Pest. On its south-western side, the narrow, irregular site opens up to the Tabak-Gasse (Dohány Utca), but the main entrance is oblique; on the opposite side, in Pfeiffer Gasse (Síp utca), there are an apartment block and a school. Sl. 2. Položajni nacrt sinagoge, oko 1900. Plan predstavlja situaciju sličnu kao u doba izgradnje: pokazuje gustoæu prijašnjih geta, odnosno zidovskih cetvrti, iako u Pešti nije postojao pravi geto. Na svomu jugozapadnom obodu parcela se otvara na Tabak-Gasse (Duhansku ulicu), ali glavni je ulaz skosen. Na drugom kraju parcele, prema Pfeiffer-Gasse, nalazi se stambena zgrada i škola.
The Tabak Temple marks the first stage of this evolution, when a large synagogue stepped onto the urban stage, wrapped into a rich, oriental garb.

**JEWS OF PEST AND THEIR DEBATES ABOUT THE STYLE AND CHOOSING THE ARCHITECT**

**PEŠTANSKI ŽIDOVI I NJIHOVE RASPRAVE O STILU I ODABIRU ARHITEKTA**

The Pest Jewish Community experienced a spectacular growth in the second third of the 19th century after residence permits were obtained in the 1840s for the Jews in the suburb of Terézváros, today the 6th district of Budapest. Historically Budapest was a compound of three independent municipalities united in 1871, four years after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise or Ausgleich. The oldest town is Óbuda (Roman: Acquincum, German: Alt Oßen) which dates back to the 2nd century as a key Roman settlement on the eastern fringes of the empire and which probably had Jewish burghers, as Jewish gravestones were found in the region. Further to the south is Buda (German: Oßen) the medieval royal seat of Hungarian kings and place where the largest medieval synagogue stood, today buried under the pavement in the Castle District. Finally, Pest, partly based on Roman and medieval foundations, became famous in the 19th century as a modern, cosmopolitan metropolis, with the Tabak Temple and other synagogues as part of it.

The most prominent Jewish families of Pest were not so much immigrants from provincial towns or faraway lands, but established and well connected people from Óbuda (today the 3rd district of Budapest), who were allowed to move into Pest, the nascent capital of Hungary from the 1840s. (Previously they had just been permitted crossing the river for attending markets and fairs.) In today's terms, they just moved from one district of the city to another. The precise number of Jews in Pest in the mid-19th century remains in obscurity. Grossman mentions 12,000 in 1852, Katona speaks about 27,101 in 1857. Anyhow they must have been powerful to be able to embark on the construction of the largest synagogue in the world without any proportionally smaller antecedent in the city of Pest.

The majority of Pest’s Jewish Community members wanted to retain the tradition of smaller prayer houses, but the ambitious leadership needed a manifesto of achievement and a showpiece of loyalty to the Christian culture and the host nation. Although the leadership was resolute to join the brave new world, even its board members, who prepared the brief for the architects, could not agree upon architectural features of the synagogue: style, composition of masses, and relationship with the immediate surroundings. Apparently, the board members were not quite clear about cultural identity and political message for the large synagogue with 3000 seats (!), to be built in the vicinity of the
old city core of Pest.\textsuperscript{13} Therefore the building committee for synagogue construction has commissioned projects from two architects: first, from the local Joseph Hild (Hild József), an established neo-classicist, who had also built the cathedral church in Eger and who had previously built for the Jewish community; and second, from another local Fritz Feßl (Feszl Frigyes), a younger and less established figure, whom history accounts for initiating the Hungarian national architectural idiom in the framework of Romanticism.\textsuperscript{14} These two architects highlighted not only the two major currents in Hungarian architecture of the period, but reflected the two main models of reasoning among the Pest Jews: building upon the conservative local gentile traditions and embarking on the romantic Hungarian nationalist project inspired by the events of 1848.

However, by the unexpected turn of events on May 18, 1854, the building committee rejected projects of both of the aforementioned architects and commissioned a project from the Bavarian-born Vienna-based architect Ludwig Förster (1797-1863), who had just begun in 1853 building his synagogue in Vienna’s Leopoldstadt district. Presumably some prior parallel negotiations must have taken place with Förster behind closed doors that echoed conflicting interests of the board members. But beyond these and the ensuing arguments, Förster’s involvement meant much more than the outcome of usual factional fighting when major sums of money were changing hands.

Christian Friedrich Ludwig Ritter von Förster (Baron Förster) was neither a traditionalist, nor a nationalist. He was just the opposite: a partisan of modernism and cosmopolitanism which included the notion of global-eclectic. This must have been very appealing to the upcoming Jewish middle classes, who were fascinated by the Enlightenment and industrial revolution. Förster was holding a professorship at the prestigious Viennese Art Academy and created the first sketches for the famous Ringstraße well before the announcement of the competition and the revolution of 1848.\textsuperscript{15} Interestingly, the initiatives to construct this magnificent street were ‘grassroots’ and not government or municipal initiative, although it later became the largest public work of the empire: Baron Adolph Pereira, the Jewish magnate asked Förster to create a sketch for the urban development,\textsuperscript{16} having on his mind the aspirations of the upcoming Jewish upper middle class that would later inhabit this boulevard along with some real nobility and major public buildings: the Opera, Stock Exchange, Parliament, City Hall, University.\textsuperscript{17} Furthermore, he excelled as a successful entrepreneur, with a firm grasp on the professional press, launching the Allgemeine Bauzeitung (General Building Journal), one of the most influential professional journals in Central European architecture. For the Jews of Pest, Förster’s appearance on the scene meant a deus ex machina in ending the deadlock of the extremely ambitious but incoherent community leadership. He was the right man in the right place and the right time. Förster, the favourite of Viennese Jewish high bourgeoisie, incorporated for the first time elements of ‘eastern cultural identity’ into a piece of architecture for his patron, Baron Adolph Pereira as early as 1846. Pereira had approached Förster in order to create an oriental style fairytale castle in a dramatically beautiful landscape by the Danube, in Königstätten at Greifenstein constructed in 1847-48. The castle was to "express the romance [of the place] and to approach forms in the Byzantine and related Arab way of building" with the intention of evoking the "Moorish aesthetic of his [Pereira’s] own [Sephardic] ancestors in Spain!"\textsuperscript{18} The Romantic corner-towers of this castle would find their way to the façade of the Viennese Tempelgasse Synagogue, and the Moorish arcades of the side- façades to the interior of the Tabak Temple in Pest.

Subsequently, gentle architects marketed the oriental style among assimilated Jews as a reference to the previous ‘Jewish Renaissance’, the medieval Jewish-Christian-Islamic coexistence and cross-fertilisation on the Iberian Peninsula from the 8th century until the expulsion in 1492 (Spain) and 1496 (Portugal). Factually, however, the choice of this so-called Moorish style was more pragmatic: it was the only free idiom, seldom used in Cen-

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\textsuperscript{13} R. KLEIN 212-225 17[2009] 2[38] PROSTOR

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The giant late Gothic cathedral, with enough standing space for 20,000 worshippers, must have made a profound architectural impact on the Bavarian-born Ludwig Förster. Sl. 5. Frauenkirche u Münchenu, architekt Jörg von Halsbach, 1468-88. Velebna katedrala s dvadeset toiska stajala miesta, po svemu sudeći, snazno je utjecala na Bavarca Ludwiga Förstera.

FIG. 4 Albert Regel’s monthly competition (Monatskonkurrenzen) entry for the ideal synagogue, 1841

This project was another important source for Förster’s composition.

Sl. 4. Natječajni rad Alberta Regela za mjesečne natjecaje (Monatskonkurrenzen) za idealan sinagoga iz 1841.

To je bio drugi izvor Försterova rješenja.

FIG. 5 Frauenkirche in Munich, architect Jörg von Halsbach, 1468-88

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Ludwig Förster's Dohány Tempel in Pest

Fig. 7 Frontal view of the main entrance to the tempel. The entrance forecourt, divided from the street by a wrought iron fence, is visible when the Dohány Street synagogue is viewed from the front. Today, people use the left-hand entrance because of security checks.

Fig. 6 The Tabak-Tempel, around 1890, photograph. Förster framed his combination of the Munich Frauenkirche and Regel's project with two projecting wings with which he tried to mask the asymmetric layout. These wings, suggested in the specifications, create a forecourt, giving the ensemble a certain monumental aspect.

Sl. 7. Tabak-Tempel oko 1890., fotografija. Förster je svoju kombinaciju Frauenkirche i Regelova projekta uokvirio dvama izbacenim rizalitima kako bi maskirao asimetričnost tlocrta. Dva izbacena rizalita, što su bila dio projektne zadace, diešomincu zatvaraju predvorje koje pridonosi monumentalnosti kompoziciji.

However, beyond following architectural fads, Förster was committed to the use of advanced technical solutions in almost all of his constructions – cast iron columns, trusses and a functionalist approach. Förster succeeded in uniting traditional aesthetic values with a modernist call for the use of new materials and methods of construction. He argued that the quest for beauty must respect function, and architecture must reflect the technical methods used. In a way he was a modernist, and both of his synagogues erected in capital cities – of which only the Dohány Street survived – account for this. (His third synagogue, built in Miskolc in 1863, is more modest in scale and outfit due to the taste and social position of the local Jewish community.) This represented a bonus for the Jewish community leaders, who were either industrialists or involved in industrialisation of the relatively backward country, but at any rate, committed to the pioneering of technology and modernization.

The message of Förster's plan – oriental pomp, modernity, cosmopolitanism, the fictive metropolitan glittering – captured the imagination of Pest's wealthy Jews, much more than the neo-Classical solidity of József Hild or a slightly more daring provincial Romanticism of Frigyes Feszl, neither of them really embodying the ideals of the upcoming Jewish bourgeoisie. It is striking that Förster omitted the mandatory dome and a lot of functional requirements prescribed in the brief by the synagogue building committee. Still, he understood better the spirituality of his clients than his colleagues in Pest, Hild and Feszl. He knew that the program written by the community leadership mattered less than the meaning of the building – he could easily scrap the prescribed dome, if his building conveyed the required monumental appearance with other means.

Presumably, Förster taken by the idea of Solomon's Temple decided not to build a central dome, because period reproductions of Solomon's Temple were without domes, and if there had been some, they would not have been dominant in the way domed synagogues or churches were in that period. In the Tabak Temple there is a small internal dome over the Ark, visible only when one comes close to it. Moreover, the large, merely decorative, domes on the façade, like in the case of Feszl's proposal and Edward Knoblauch's Oranienburgerstrasse synagogue in Berlin, were probably not convincing for functionalist requirements in the community.

20 He built the first partly metal structure for sacred use, the Lutheran Church in Gumpendorf in 1846, followed by the Leopoldstadt or Tempelgasse Synagogue in 1853 and finally the Tabak Temple in 1854.

21 In functional terms Förster's design was rather problematic; seven staircases, of which some are very narrow and dark, connected different levels, unclear traffic of believers and employees, etc. The Building Committee made some polite remarks, but the architect failed to address the shortcomings.

22 Edward Knoblauch’s building was inaugurated in 1867, much later than the Tabak Temple, but it has had smaller predecessors in terms of dome arrangement that should have been known to Ludwig Förster.

23 Feszl's project could not have been built on such a narrow slot, but according to the records he was not at-
Förster. The site was also too narrow to create an effective looking dome, since the ones envisaged by his competitors were simply not realistic.23

ARCHITECT LUDWIG FÖRSTER ON JEWISH IDENTITY AND ITS ARCHITECTURAL PARALLEL

POGLEĐI ARHITEKTA LUDWIGA FÖRSTERA NA ŽIDOVSKI IDENTITET I NJEGOV ODRAZ NA ARHITEKTURU

As it has been often in the 19th century, Förster marketed his preferred formal solutions with some impressive theories. For the Tabak Temple he put forward some quasi scholarly considerations, but in fact Förster had little time to visit far away locations, such as Spain, the Maghreb or the Middle East, or to study architectural history from books, being occupied with his prosperous office and busy public life. Nevertheless, he tried to justify his architectural language in a scholarly manner: "... For an Israelite Temple neither Egyptian, nor Greek, neither Romanic nor Gothic architectural style..."24 He put into the same basket Byzantine and Islamic architecture, the products of conflicting cultures, as they were both seen as 'eastern' relative to Western Christianity. For him, as for the majority of 19th century westerners the Orient was an arbitrary projection. More importantly, in architectural terms Förster's statement means that de-materialising styles were preferable to material-tectonic ones. Moreover, beyond architectural issues Förster touched upon some supposed characteristics of the Jews and their identity which he wanted to represent in the style of the synagogue:

"...the newest excavations in Corsabad, Nineveh and Babylon are repositories of the ancient oriental building styles. They could have been the basis of the oldest Jewish Temple, albeit it cannot be substantiated that the Arabs and Persians had a building style in Solomon's time..."25 ...But the forms of these peoples are suitable for the traditional Jewish service and the fantastic and wonderful elevated mood (Gemütherhebungen) of the Jews with the prophets and they explain the otherwise not quite clear descriptions about Solomon's Temple. This Temple should be the prototype of every synagogue and it has been the model for the oldest Christian churches, rather than the Roman basilicas, as Christianity is entirely rooted in Judaism.26 Förster's statement was incorrect: both the synagogue and the church had evolved from antique basilicas and not from Solomon's Temple. The link between the basilicas on the one side, and the synagogues and churches on the other, is not merely formal, but functional as well: both the synagogue and the church were houses to be entered, closed spaces with interiors cut off from the surrounding – man-made and natural environ-
The absence of decoration from the drawings accentuates the industrial character of the synagogue. The longitudinal section reveals its duality: towards Tabak Street it appears to be an oriental building with chiselled surfaces and masses, while hiding behind a larger and simpler edifice created in the spirit of industrial architecture and a neo-Romanesque version of Romanticism, called Rundbogenstil.

The great cathedral interior is preceded by an oblique courtyard cut by Tabak (Dohány) Street. Women entered the wings, man the central gate.

The absence of decoration from the drawings of the synagogue speaks of a decorative layer over a modern metal bearing structure. The aforementioned synthetic, hybrid style sends the message of the newly acquired Jewish identity, based on Western and Eastern traditions as well as on commitment to modernity, to its economic, political and cultural dimensions, as witnessed by the press — Jewish and gentile alike.29

MEDIA ECHO

The Media echo during the period testifies to a proper understanding of the message Ludwig Förster and his clients sent to the public. The Viennese journal Illustrierte Zeitung reports on the style of the Tabak Temple in Pest:

"The style is Moorish, which is so suitable for synagogues [...]. The intellectual characteristics [geistige Eigenschaften], the language and religious service of Jews and gentiles. Moreover, Förster intentionally glossed over the functional differences between Solomon’s Temple and the synagogue — originally just a replacement for the Temple, that was destroyed for the last time in 70 AD and never rebuilt thereafter. In the medieval and early modern Jewish tradition Solomon’s Temple referred to Jerusalem and the idea of Jews living in their homeland, whereas the synagogue was rather an element of the Exile. (Historically there has been an overlap of the Second Temple and synagogues, during which the former was the holiest place of the Jews, and synagogues served more for the everyday religious practice.) As emancipated Jews felt more and more at home in modern 19th century nation states — at least officially — they refused to return to Jerusalem, and they upgraded their synagogues into ‘temples,’ both in common parlance and in terms of architecture. Förster’s controversial philosophy resulted in an architectural hybrid concerning interior arrangement and architectural language. The Tabak Temple’s large, elongated, basilical plan resembling a catholic church rejects the small scale and centrality of former synagogues, albeit ritual elements are largely kept intact, apart from moving the bimah to the east, in front of the Ark.28 The synagogue’s architectural language mixes German Rundbogenstil (semicircular Romanticism in the 1840s and 1850s) and Islamic stylistic elements. Furthermore, the latter are not genuine; they only create a decorative layer over a modern metal bearing structure. The aforementioned synthetic, hybrid style sends the message of the newly acquired Jewish identity, based on Western and Eastern traditions as well as on commitment to modernity, to its economic, political and cultural dimensions, as witnessed by the press — Jewish and gentile alike.29"
ality [gestaltloser Spiritualismus] and artificial way of thinking [erkünstelte Denkweise] as well as rich fantasy. All these emerge like a fata morgana in the Moorish forms in front of our eyes, while theoreration displays the most conspicuous penchant for pomp. High Gothic, on the other hand, contrary to Arab architecture, structured individual architectural elements into harmonic and organic unity. The oriental spirit differs from the Germanic (Sic!). Arab architecture impresses with richness and mechanical repetition and not with organic structure."

The author’s beliefs testify to the typical mis-understanding of Islamic architecture and Muslim spirituality of the age that, following the Judaic ban on images, avoids translating ideas into tangible material form. He condemns not only Islamic architecture from a ‘Germanic’ standpoint, but also Semper’s Theory of Cladding, the theoretical base to ‘oriental style’ and precondition for Art Nouveau and eventually the 20th century modernism. The emphasis of the Germanic versus Arabic spirit echoes Carl Schnaase’s ideas, and the supposed Jewish ‘floating’ foreshadows some twentieth-century anti-Semitic arguments in the theory of arts, as formulated by the proponents of the National Socialist concept of entartete Kunst (degenerate art). Still, in that period Schnaase’s theories remained in the framework of political correctness, in which Christian superiority over other cultures, including Jewish, was a matter of fact. The Illustrierte Zeitung pointed out in a pseudo-scientific justification the use of oriental language. It related Avicena (Abu Ali al-Husayn ibn Abd Allah ibn Sina, 980-1037) and Averroes (Abu al-Walid Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Rushd, 1126-98) to Maimonides (Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, 1135-1204), referring to the famous Iberian cultural symbiosis of Jews, Christians and Muslims. Despite referring to great Jewish and Muslim thinkers, there was something belittling in the way Germans (Austrians) suggested the Jews should use the “Moorish Style” — a mix of many oriental idioms, Turkish, Egyptian, Moorish or Indian — due to their kinship with the Arabs, in order to keep ‘synagogue style’ a second rate idiom.

The application of oriental forms has had a history in Western architecture, of equally subordinated character. Turquerie, Turkish pavilions in the gardens of castles were a common place; John Nash initiated the use of oriental style in the Royal Pavilion in Brighton (1815-18), Karl Ludwig von Zanth created Villa Wilhelma (1837–51), the "Moorish Palace" for King Wilhelm I of Württemberg (1816–64). In all instances a borrowing from the Orient was limited to less prominent public buildings in Central European architecture too. In addition, some aesthetically not entirely established elements in public buildings — as metal structure — rounded up this genre, which sometimes inadvertently became avant-garde. The new idiom contained, however, much more: Europe’s opening towards the East, colonialism — the idea of an ‘Enlightened World Empire’ — and with it, the realisation of the idea of permanent global progress (actually a secularised version of...
Fig. 14 The eastern façade of the synagogue.
Unlike the orientally flavoured west façade, this one is almost entirely western with its typical neo-Romanesque style. If there were no red stripes over the yellow brick it could be a Protestant church. This façade was not visible from the street at the time of construction; it only became visible in the early twentieth century when Wesselényi Street was extended to the Károly Ring. In front of the synagogue stands the Holocaust memorial, erected after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Fig. 15 Façade detail in winter.
The western façade is covered with a carpet-type pattern which, together with the onion shape spire, gives the building an oriental flavour.

Fig. 16 Façade-detail from the ground floor.
The horizontal strip-decoration circumvents the octagonal corner-pillar.

There are certain similarities between the oriental language of Western synagogues and 19th century colonial architecture. They both express a double condition, double bind, which is basically asymmetric: the more mature and developed West vis-à-vis the colourful, exotic East (or the rest of the globe), but the one which is positioned lower along the ‘evolutional line of culture’. (The whole idea of ‘development’ or ‘advance’ is highly western, a product of a linear conception of history, Hegelian, but its roots go back as far as the first passages of the Old Testament.) Both in the case of synagogues and the case of colonial architecture the encounter of the two different cultures is amply accentuated, not without political intentions – justifying the lower status of the exotic Orientals vis-à-vis the westerners. No matter that in the case of Jews the ‘exotics’ have written the Old Testament – they somehow had to be rendered ‘Arabic’ in order to keep a low-grade position among Christians.

This double condition translates into architecture as the deployment of Western floor-plans, principles of composition, but seasoned with some aboriginal motifs, either to accommodate climatic demands or just for highlighting double-identity or political ‘good will’ of the ‘enlightened’ people towards the indigenous.

Real and profound encounters of cultures in 19th century colonial architecture were largely avoided and considered as futile. How can one acknowledge the equality of cultures and maintain a colonial relationship? (An equal footing merger occurred later in the 20th century through the adoption of Japanese and Chinese elements by modernists – Frank Lloyd Wright, Adolf Loos, Gerrit Rietveld, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Richard Neutra, Carlo Scarpa, etc.) For instance, in the Maghreb, French urban planners were eager to separate their modern ‘hygienic’ urban fabric from the native one, often treating the former as a kind of ‘natural reserve’, integrating it vaguely into a new grid of avenues but leaving it practically untouched. In order to establish some kind of continuity between the old and new urban fabric – in the eyes of westerners – some cosmetic measures has been taken. Architects applied selected decorative motives from the buildings seen in the old medina to new buildings. Probably the most grotesque – and charming – examples is in Casablanca, where the art nouveau and déco high-rise blocks of flats stand in stark contrast to Moslem traditions, but embellished
with some Moresque decoration on certain façade surfaces.

Synagogues were not the only oriental genre in 19th century Europe, albeit the most widespread. Oriental style in the Habsburg Empire was spearheaded by the Viennese Arsenal Building created by Theophil Hansen and Ludwig Förster in 1850-56. Its oriental style was eventually adopted by other buildings in the empire. Some Jewish community buildings in the empire took up this idiom too, even in such a remote example as the Jewish Hospital in Lemberg (today L’viv, Ukraine). This building figures oddly in the predominantly western architectural context of the Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Greco-Catholic city, more so than the Arsenal in Vienna, a city that did have some contact with the Orient, not only in pastry and coffee culture, but in the already mentioned Karlskirche façade.

Colonial synagogues represent a special case: oriental language brought back to the Orient, where the Jews — even indigenous ones — uniformly represented the West. Their quasi oriental language vied in opposition to the ‘original Orient’ — Mumbay, Tunis or Cairo — highlighting the special social and political position of their builders. In other words, colonial synagogues are oriental not in a genuine oriental manner, but the way the centre perceived the periphery. Jews living in the periphery wanted to emphasise their allegiance to the centre, its supposed social and technological progress. While in the West they were the ‘Asians of Europe’, here they were ‘western Orientals’ of a supposed ‘real Orient’.

**CONCLUSION**

**ZAKLJUČAK**

In this paper I tried to show the historic context of oriental style used widely for synagogues in the second half of the 19th century in continental Europe and North America on the example of the Tabak Tempel, the grand synagogue of Pest. The issue of mid-19th century synagogue architecture is not merely academic. It also relates to the dilemmas, shortcomings of a post-colonial, globalized world, in attempts to reconcile universal Western and supposed oriental (Jewish and Arabic) modes, to patch up the ‘centre’ with the ‘periphery’. Two distinct cultural identities, two contexts represented by the great synagogue can be found in colonial architecture too, creating another hybrid. In both cases there is an element of indigenous — Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, etc. — ‘supported’ by the universal, i.e. Western modes. In stylistic terms it translates as a set of ‘exotic’ motifs embedded into a Western syntax and structural principles. The idea behind this is that these particularities are going to dissolve into a universal human paragon, which is as a matter of fact, defined by the more developed West. Thus, both in synagogue and colonial architecture there is a paternalism of the ‘advanced people’ over the indigenous or Jewish ones — both equated in the 19th century with the vague concept of ‘orientalism’.

In architectural terms the ‘oriental style’ of the grand synagogue of Budapest and its sequence furnished a tutti frutti backdrop against which ‘Gothic purity’ and organicity or in other words Western/Christian superiority could be assessed and demonstrated. However, we know today, that the tutti frutti was more a projection, a Western construct than reality. The tutti frutti got into the heart of the ‘centre’. The supposedly organic and pure West, whose modes by the 19th century became impure, lost its raison d’être as the ‘order maker’. A further century was needed until the ‘centre’ — pre-eminently the French philosophy — realised in structuralist and post-structuralist thought, started losing its superiority to the periphery. Today we use the term *globalisation* through which the cultural supremacy of the ‘centre’ dissolves itself: centripetal and centrifugal forces form the contemporary world. The 19th century synagogues seem to have anticipated this in cultural and architectural terms.

35 Architekt K. Moklowski has built the Jewish Hospital in 1898-1901, today Rappoport Street 8. In: ***2007: 249

[35 Lektura: ŽELJKA MIKLOŠEVIĆ, prof.]
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Illustration Sources

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SUMMARY

LUDWIG FÖRSTEROV DÖHÁNY-TEMPEL U PEŠTI
MAURSKA KATEDRALA ZA „AZIJE EUROPE”

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, architects and urbanists made significant contributions to the development of urban landscapes and cultural heritage. This summary focuses on the work of Ludwig Förster, a prominent architect and urban planner who played a crucial role in shaping the cityscape of Budapest, the capital of Hungary.

Förster is known for his innovative approach to urban design, particularly in the context of the interwar period. His work in Budapest, especially in the area of religious architecture, showcases a blend of traditional and modern design elements. Förster's designs often featured a blend of historical and contemporary materials, reflecting the city's rich cultural heritage.

One of Förster's most notable works was the Dohány-Tempel, located in Pest, which is the eastern part of Budapest. This building, completed in 1869, was originally designed by Joseph Hild and later expanded by Förster. The structure is a prime example of the Moorish Revival style, characterized by its ornate details and grandeur.

Förster's approach to urban planning was influenced by his interest in the history and theory of architecture, as well as his engagement with the works of contemporaries such as Bruno Taut and Walter Gropius. His designs often reflected a deep understanding of the cultural and historical context of the location.

In summary, Förster's contributions to architecture and urban planning in Budapest are significant. His work not only reflected the city's rich cultural heritage but also contributed to the development of modern urban design principles.

RUDOLF KLEIN

BIOGRAFIJA

RUDOLF KLEIN (1955.), Arhitekt, Dr. Eng. Dr. Phil., is professor of 19th and 20th century architectural history and theory. His special interest is the link between architecture and ideas, interaction of civilizations in the field of architecture and the arts. He is author of seven and co-author of three books. He has published over 40 reviewed papers. He teaches modern architectural history at Saint Steven University’s Ybl Faculty of Architecture in Budapest, formerly at Tel Aviv University, School of Architecture.

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Rudolf Klein

Ludwig Förster’s Dohány Tempel in Pest
Modrish Cathedral for the “Asiates Of Europe”

Scientific Papers

UDC 726:296/7.035(439 Pešta)“18” L. Förster