

IMRE HENSZLMANN, AND THE ORIGINS OF MONUMENTS PRESERVATION IN HUNGARY*

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Fig. 1. Portrait of Imre Henszlmann

Abstract

Initially, history of architecture, theory of architecture and monuments preservation were strictly interlaced in Hungary, for that Imre Henszlmann, scholar of history of arts (1813—1888) is to be credited with, having spent enormous energy on disclosing, systematizing remnants of Hungarian architecture history, on organizing protection and reconstruction.

* To the memory of Jenő Major.

A main goal of his scientific activity has been to develop a theory of architecture, expected to help — in addition to disclose “fundamentals” of the universal development of architecture, — integration of remnants of Hungarian architecture to the history of European architecture.

At the 1988 centenary of the decease of Imre Henszlmann, a memorial exhibition was held at the Faculty of Architecture of the Technical University of Budapest. Exhibited selections of his drawings and publications represented three trends of his rich activities actually delivered at three sections those of History of Architecture, of Monuments Preservation, and of Theory of Architecture, of the Institute of History and Theory of Architecture, TUB, also concerned with research work for the sake of development.

In the paper, the life path of Imre Henszlmann will be recapitulated, complemented with some documents from the exhibition, that were but partly published to now, and await careful analysis.

Imre Henszlmann was born October 13, 1813, in Kassa (now Košice, Czechoslovakia). After his secondary schools in Eperjes (Prešov), he studied medicine in Pesth, then in Vienna. He was conferred the Dr. Med. degree in Padua.

Still as an Eperjes student, he was made acquainted with “archaeology and collection of works of art requiring a wide range of knowledge” by Gábor Fejérváry, landowner famed for his archaeological activity.

In Vienna, he deepened his knowledge in arts by means of the famous collection of Joseph Daniel Böhm, medallist, to be still furthered during his 1837 travel in Italy. He spent much time in Venice, Rome and Naples.

In 1841, after publication of his study entitled “Comparison of Ancient and Modern Arts Views and Educations, with Special Consideration to the Development of Arts in Hungary”, he was elected correspondence member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

In the '30s and '40s of the past century he had been concerned with publicism and arts criticism. To make Hungarian reformist endeavours known abroad, he issued a periodical in Leipzig entitled “Vierteljahrschrift aus und für Ungarn”.

In 1848, Ferenc Pulszky was appointed secretary of state, and Imre Henszlmann assistant clerk and press reporter under Minister of Foreign Affairs Pál Esterházy.

After fall of the Vienna Revolution he was sentenced to eight months of prison. Released, he fled to Paris, then to London, where he settled in strict relation to Ferenc Pulszky, acting as a cohesive force between, and organizing, Hungarian emigrants. He came back by the early '60s.

In 1866 he was appointed professor of arts history at the University of Arts and Sciences. In 1872 he became the first official of the just established “Temporary Committee of Hungarian Monuments”, that he remained in the “National Monuments Committee” established in 1882. This activity made him the founder and first organizer of Hungarian monuments preservation. He continued these aesthetician, architecture historian, architecture theoretician, monuments preservational activities until his decease on December 6, 1888.

His legacy, — including inestimably valued sketches, studies — were demised to Kassa, his native city. Also the Museum of Kassa was endowed by his library, his rich collection of pictures and etchings.

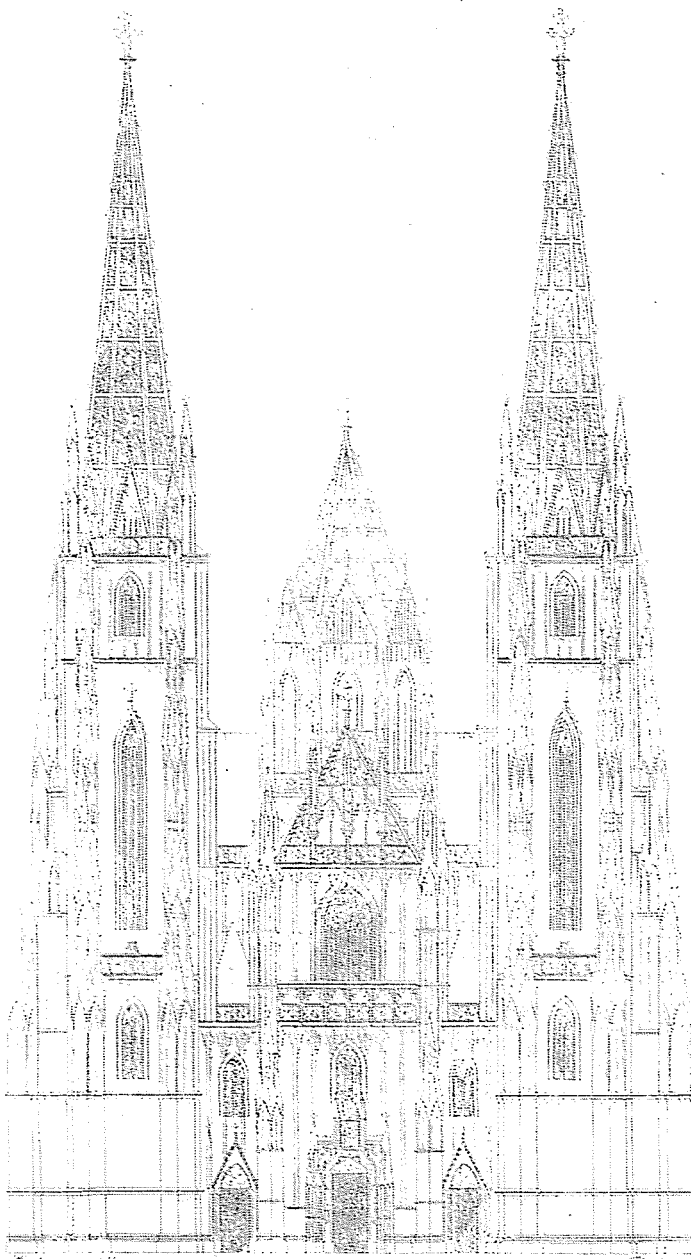


Fig. 2. Principal façade of the cathedral of Kassa. Print based on theoretical reconstruction and drawing by Imre Henszlmann, 1846

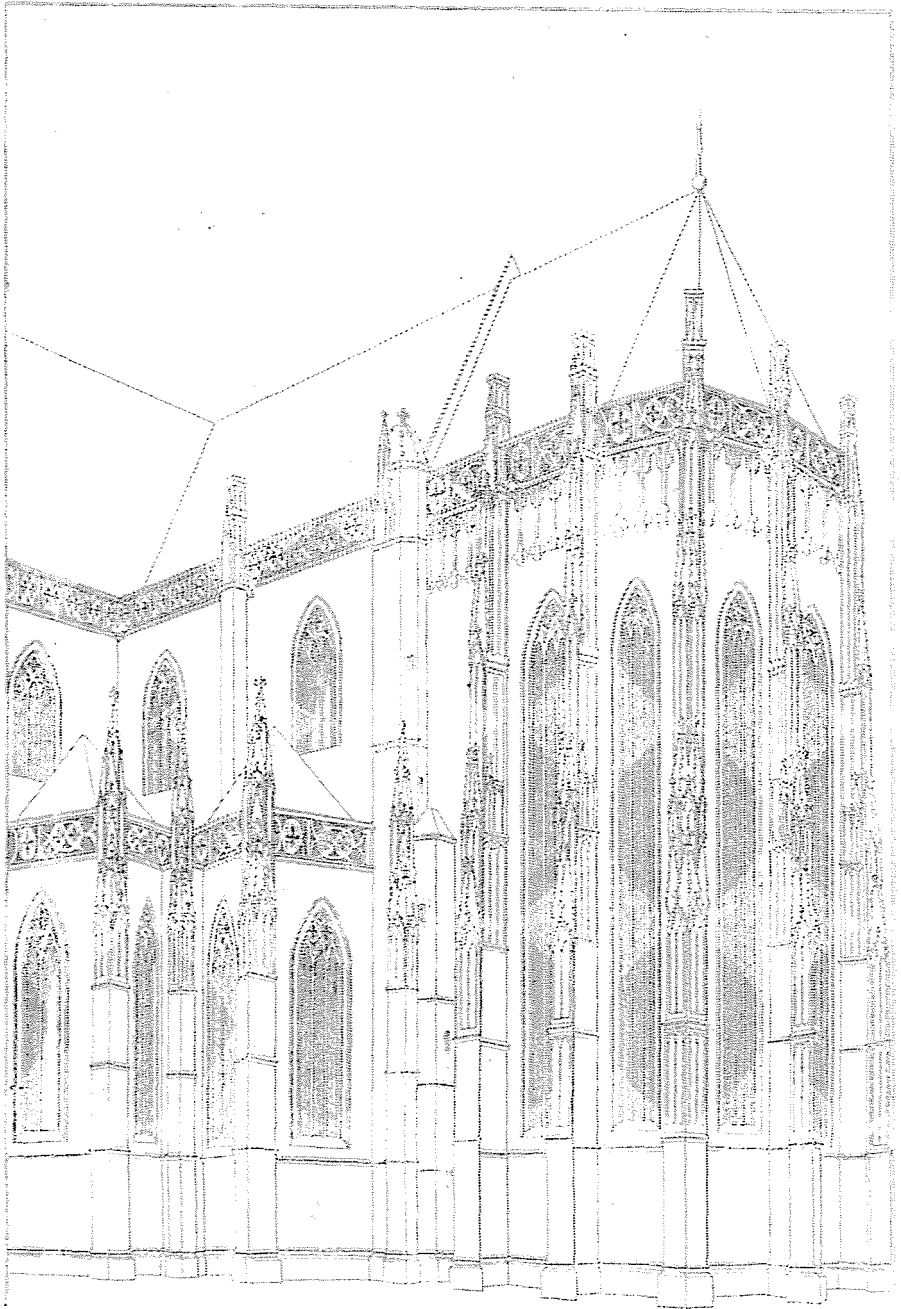


Fig. 3. Apsis of the cathedral of Kassa. Print based on theoretical reconstruction and drawing by Imre Henszlmann, 1846

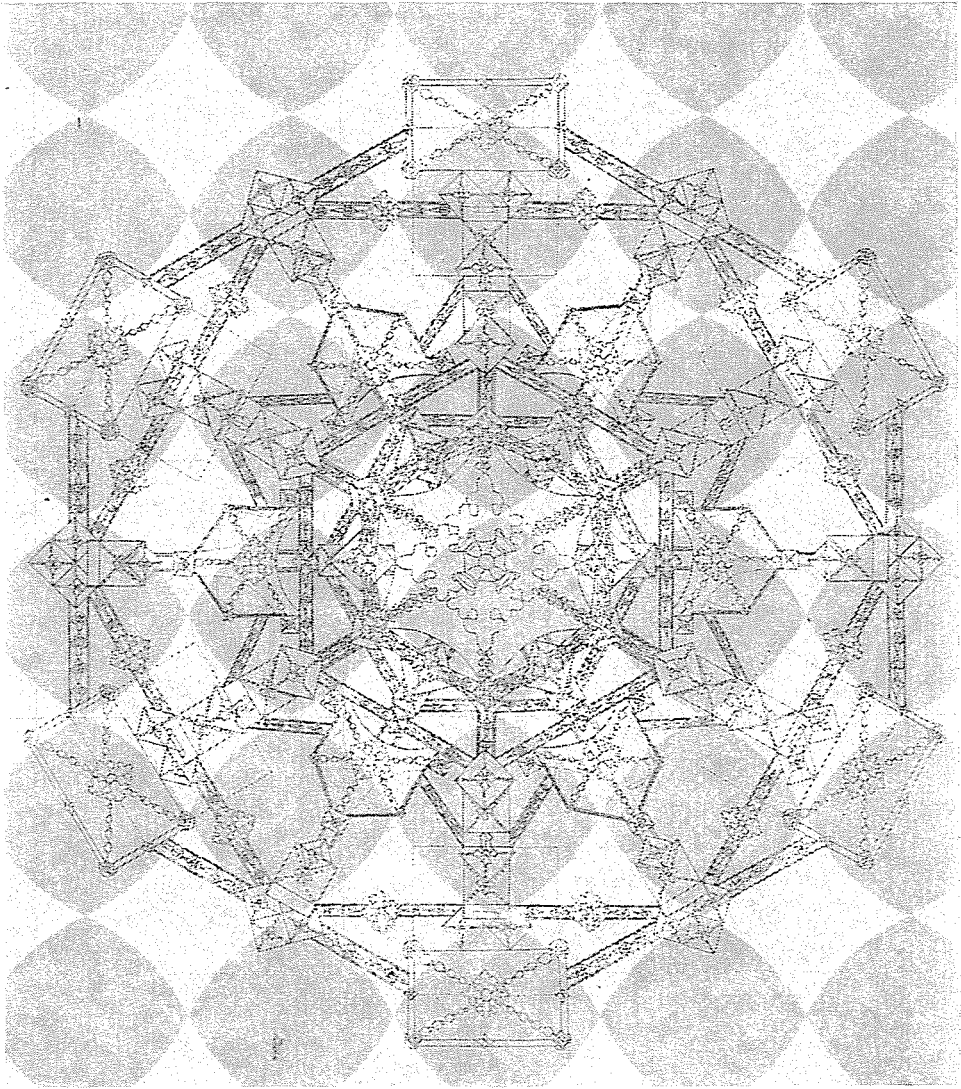


Fig. 4. Floor plan construction of the Gothic tabernacle of the cathedral of Kassa. Drawing by Imre Henszlmann, 1846

Architecture Historian Activity

His first work entitled "Old German-style Churches in the City of Kassa" appeared in 1846. In 1864 he reported of achievements of "Excavations in Székesfehérvár". In the subsequent two decades, he had still two opportunities to direct excavations. As a result, he first reconstructed remnants of the

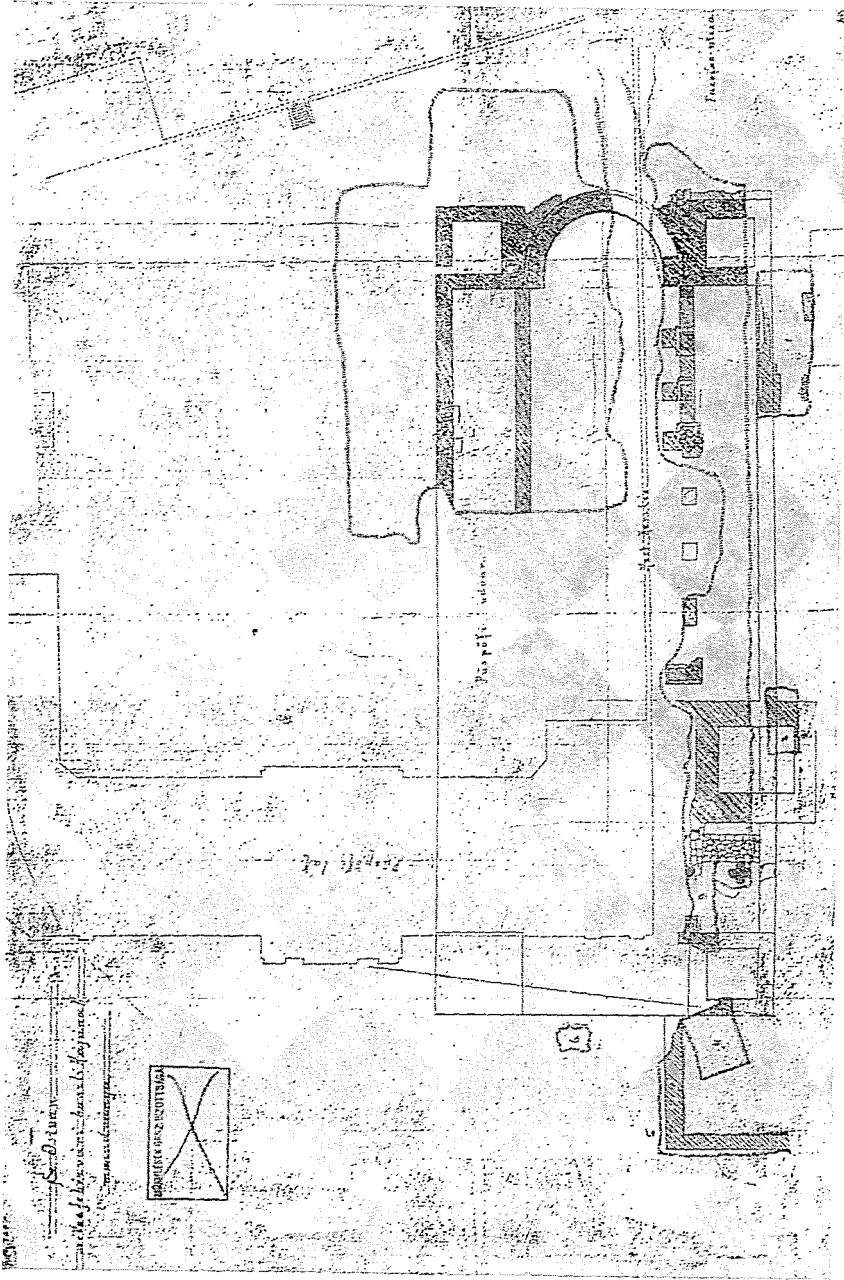


Fig. 5. Excavation of remnants of the mediaeval coronation church in Székesfehérvár. Drawing by Imre Henszlmann of the 1882 achievements of the excavations begun in 1835

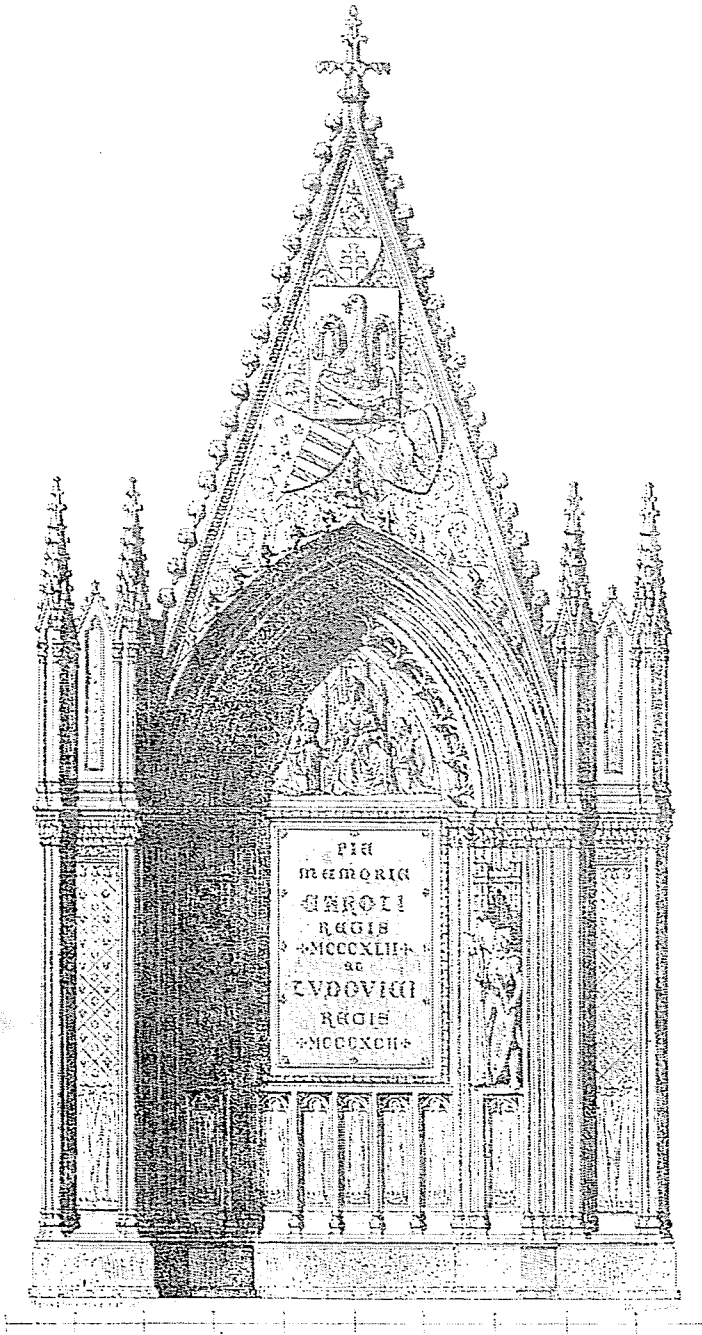


Fig. 6. Design of the sepulchre of King Louis the Great, Székesfehérvár by Imre Henszlmann, making use of the excavated ground wall ruins and of some Gothic architectural remnants

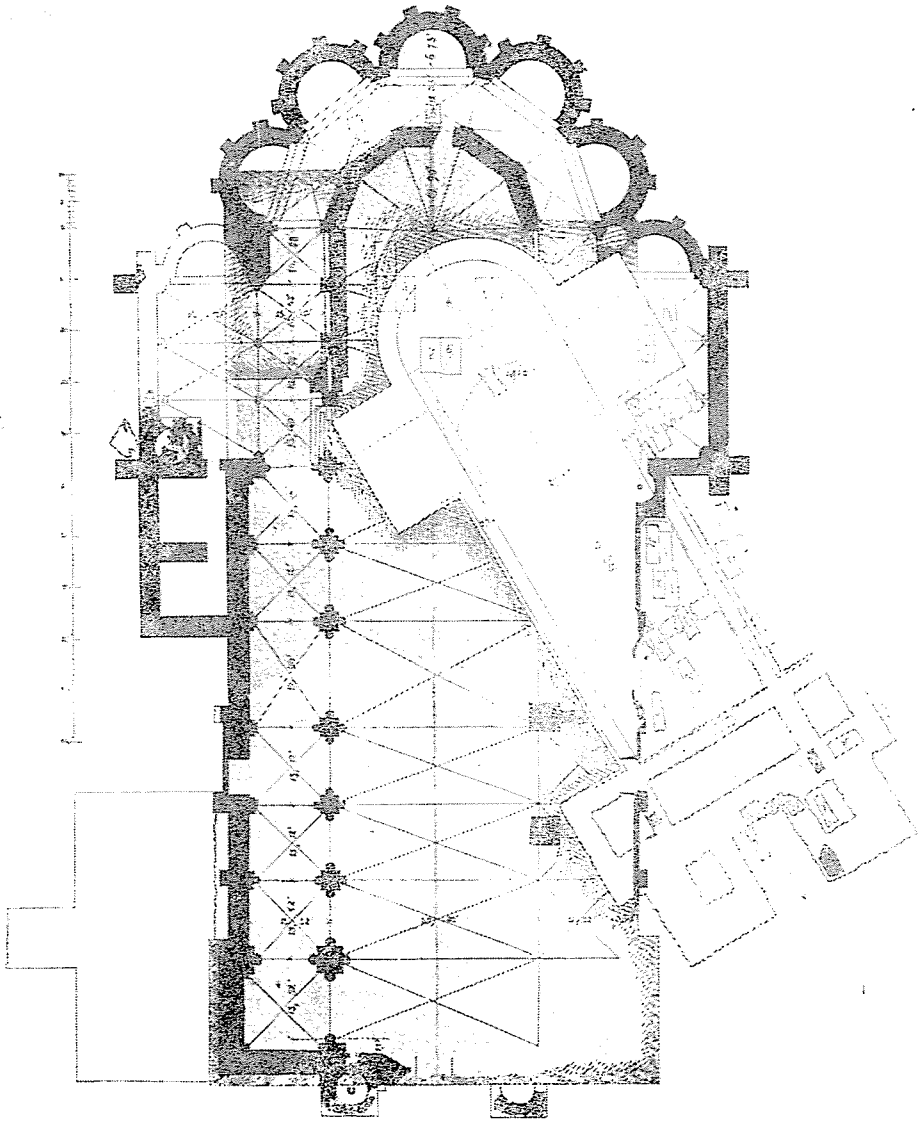


Fig. 7. Ground plan of the first and second cathedrals of Kalocsa disclosed by Imre Henszmann, reconstructing the early Hungarian-type “four-tower” cathedral

Székesfehérvár coronation church, and established his theory on four-towered cathedrals in the age of St. Stephen.

His building archaeology method was applied to disclose — among the first ten episcopates — that of Kalocsa, and remnants of that of Csanád, and

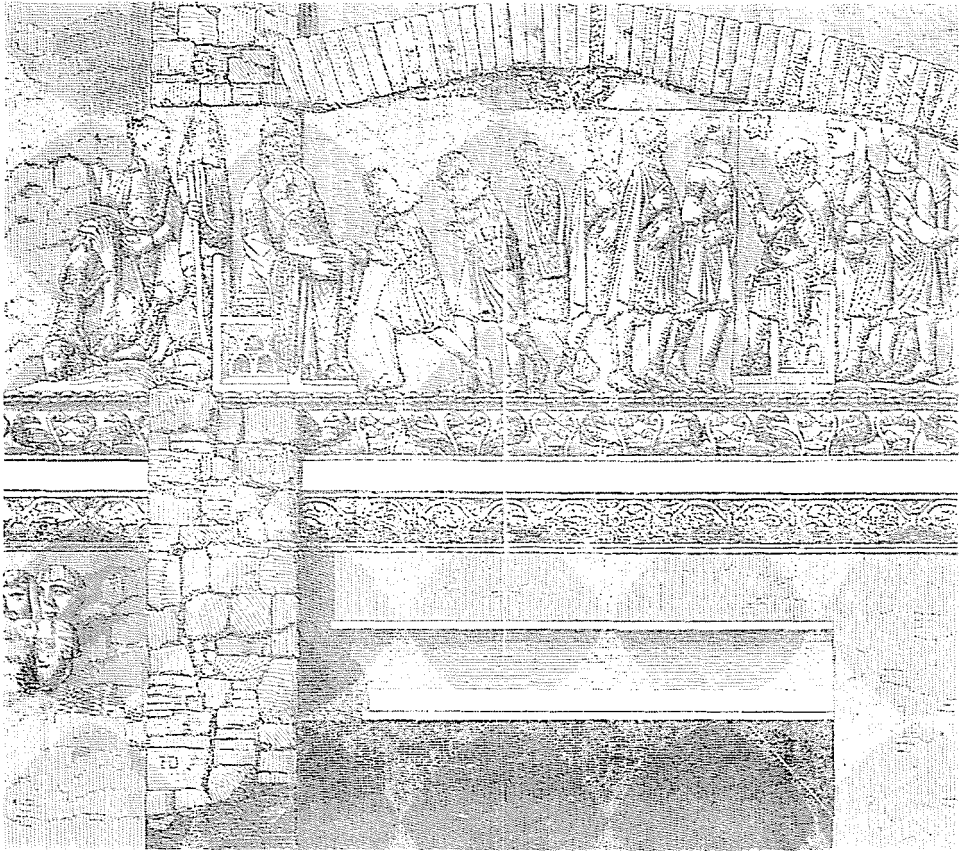


Fig. 8. Survey drawing by Imre Henszlmann of the Romanesque sculptured ornament of the undercroft of the cathedral of Pécs. Instead of the "reconstruction" designed by Friedrich Schmidt, Henszlmann argued for keeping in-situ the original sculptured ornament

participated in the disclosure of wall fragments of the Várad cathedral. His architecture historian examinations have led to the determination of sensible building periods of the cathedrals of Pécs, Győr, Esztergom and Gyulafehérvár.

Based on latest achievements of his age, he applied comparative analyses to describe early Christian murals in the cubicle of Pécs. He investigated great many mediaeval monastic churches, of them monographies on those at Kisbény and Bélapátfalva are worth mentioning.

He had been concerned with the highly valuable Gothic monuments of Sopron, Lőcse, Eperjes. While he himself stressed that there are still many architecture historian analyses to be made, his achievements have been published in two volumes, "Primitive Christian, Romanesque and Transient Style Architectural Remnants in Hungary" and "Gothic Monuments in Hungary".



Fig. 9. Detail of the sculpture of the undercroft passage in original condition in Pécs

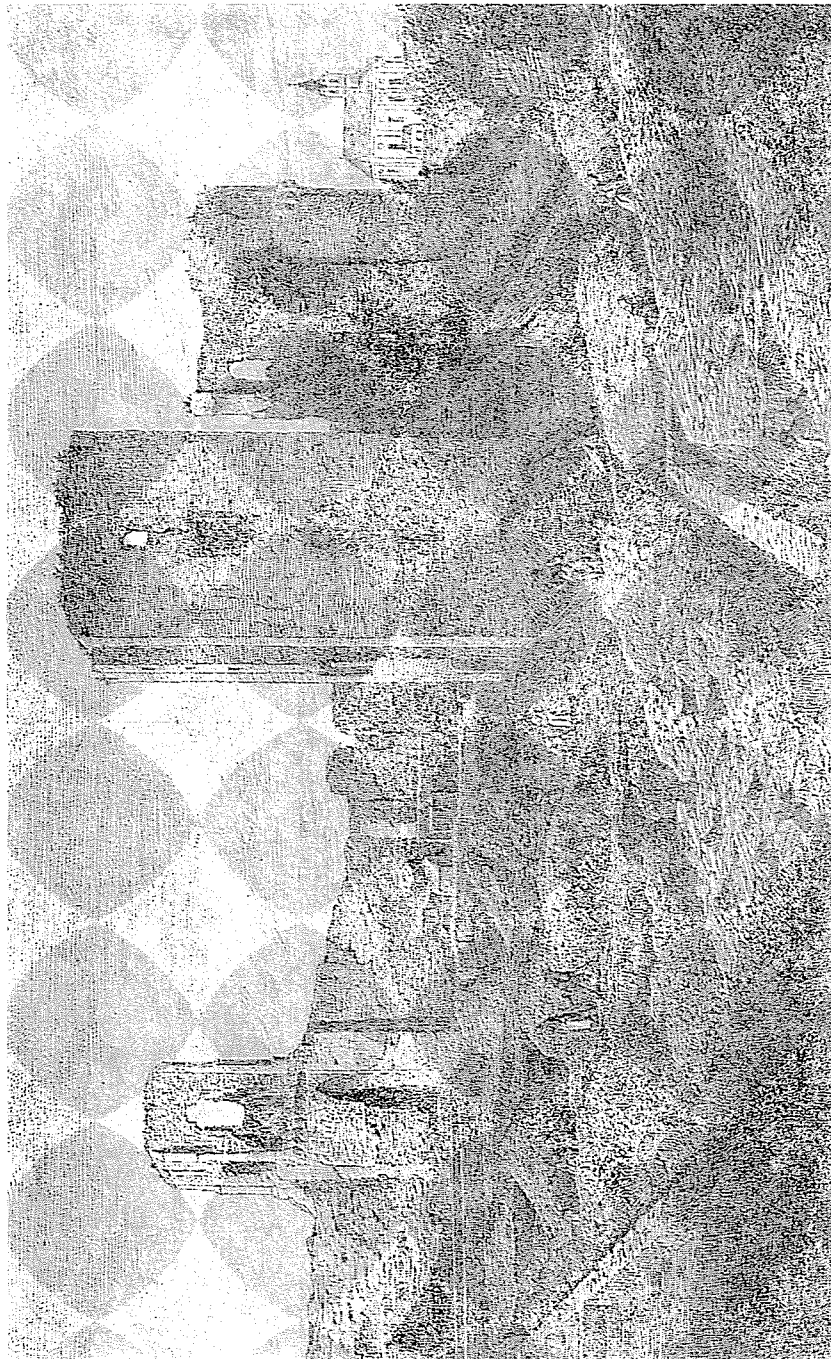


Fig. 10. Excavation of Fort Bács. Xylograph after a drawing by Imre Henszlmann, 1862

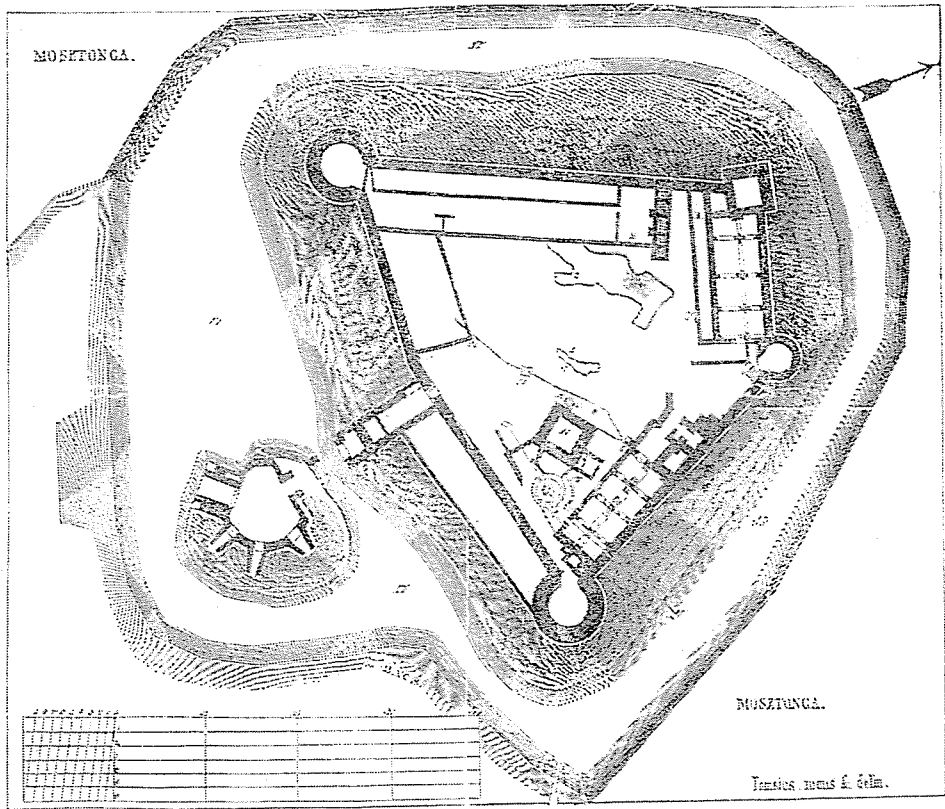


Fig. 11. Ground plan of Fort Bács disclosed by Imre Henszlmann

By disclosing the citadel in Visegrád, and the castle of Bács, and by describing the mediaeval circular fortification walls of Lőcse, he laid the foundations of castle disclosure in Hungary. He was the first to recapitulate the history of mediaeval architecture in Hungarian, completed with a vocabulary of history of architecture in five languages.

Theory of architecture, Theory of Architectural Proportions

Already in his 1846 study of the churches in Kassa, Imre Henszlmann refers to his investigations of the proportion system of mediaeval constructions.

During his emigration, he submitted his theory to the "Royal Institute of British Architects" in London, then in 1862 he published the first volume of

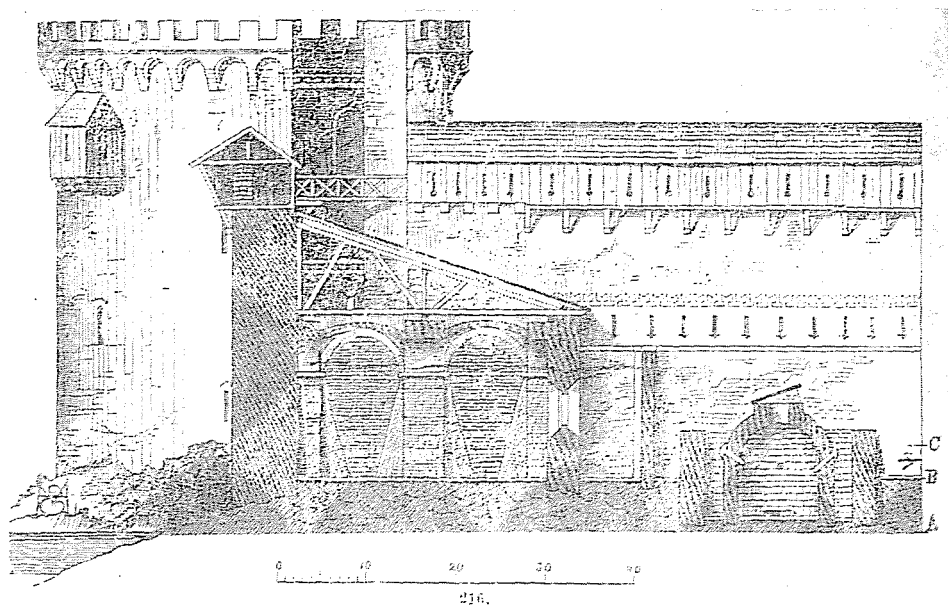


Fig. 12. Reconstruction by Imre Henszlmann of the cistern and SE bastion of Fort Bács, based on his archaeological excavations

text and figures of its developed version in Paris, sponsored by the French Academy.

He applied construction norms deduced from his theory for the reconstruction drawings of the Nagyvárad cathedral, of the second Kalocsa cathedral, for locating the cathedral of Pécs in the history of architecture. These principles were underlying his comments on proportions of churches in Kisdény, Belpátfalva, Ják, Lébény, on the mediaeval structure of the Győr cathedral in Baroque disguise, on the domes of Pozsony and Kassa, the Benedictine church in Sopron, cathedral remnants, ruins. "The romantic rapture of alchemists was needed to ignore shortcomings in attempting to explain all these from a single principle."

His theory of architecture was expected to offer a better understanding of the examined constructions; after disclosure of structural features, he endeavoured to relate the tested construction to various monuments abroad, on the basis of the disclosed structural correlations. His theory was intended to help also the practice of architecture: "Artists and architects need help for that their works and not appear as failures. It should be endeavoured to disclose strictly kept mediaeval construction areas, to find thereby specifications the respect of which grants success and assurance for contemporary architects just as it did in mediaeval constructions." "The development of his theory of archi-

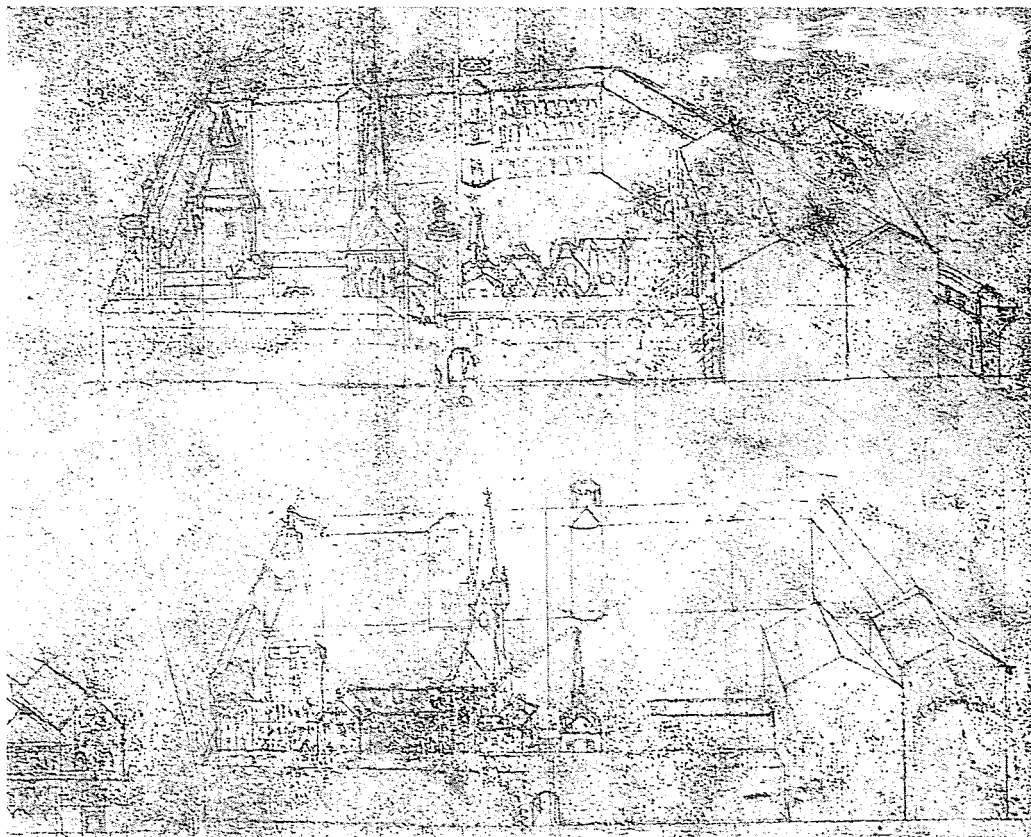


Fig. 13. Reconstruction drawing by Imre Henszlmann of King Mathias' Palace in Buda, after remnants known to him, and from literary descriptions

ecture required great many surveys, calculations, an “excess work” hardly attributable — in the case of Henszlmann of rather practical mentality — to the attraction of mysterious mediaeval workshop secrets. He endeavoured to find an organizing principle, a safe footing to interpret monuments almost incomprehensibly unique, also hard to determine historically.”

Monuments Preservation

In 1846 the Kassa Congress of Hungarian Physicians and Naturalists submitted a proposal developed by Imre Henszlmann to the Parliament and the Academy to preserve architectural monuments in this country.

During the caretaker government after the War of Independence, matters of the at last incipient Hungarian monuments preservation were handled by

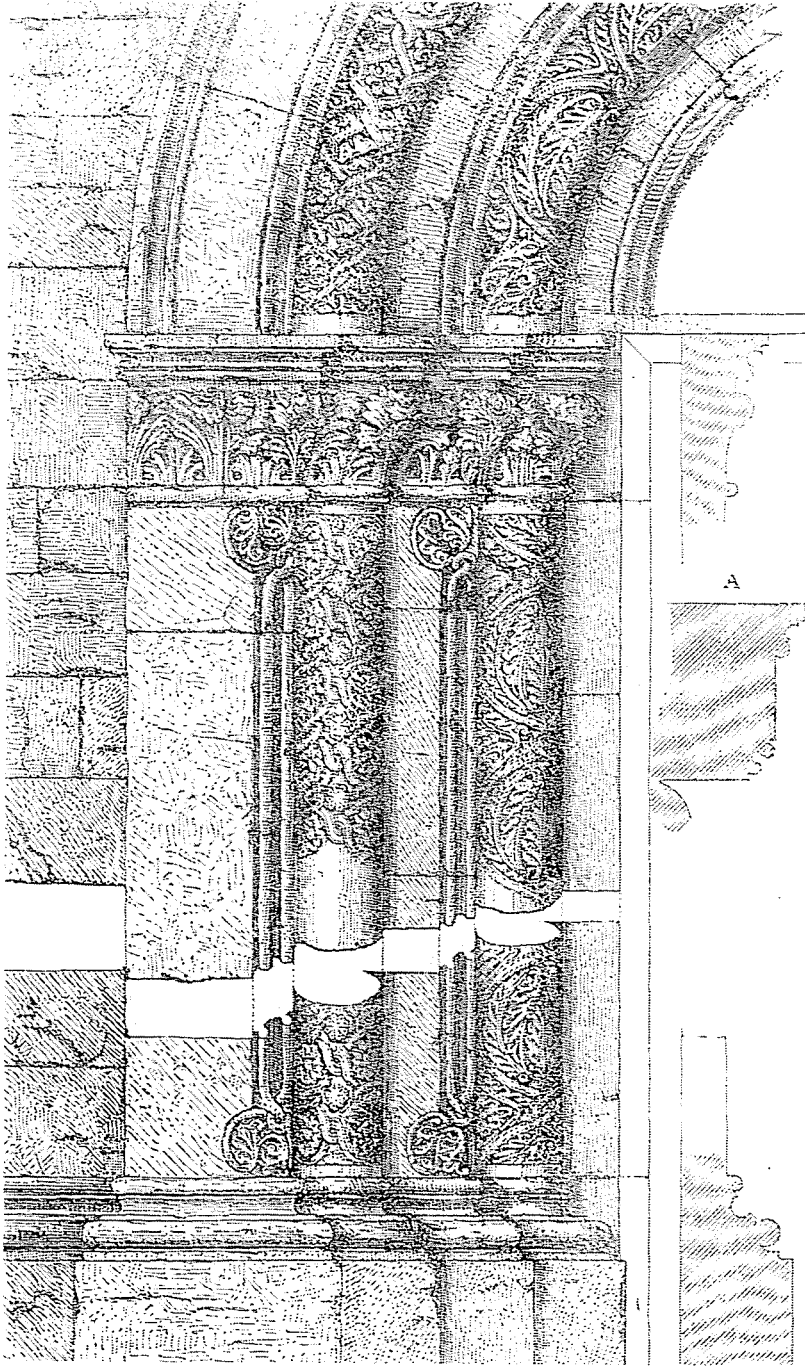


Fig. 14. "Romanesque Gate" — one of the figures of the first Hungarian study and vocabulary of history of architecture

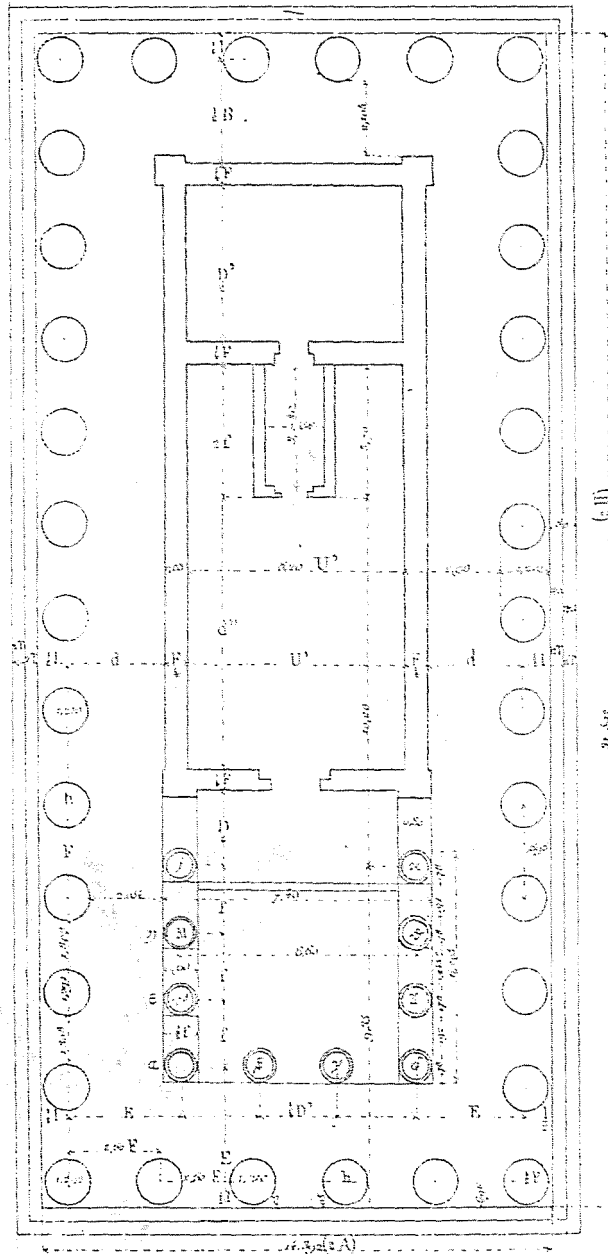


Fig. 5. — Petit T. de Paestum

Gravé par Erhard

Fig. 15. Detail of the study of the proportion system of the "small" church in Paestum, from "Theory of Architecture" by Imre Henszlmann

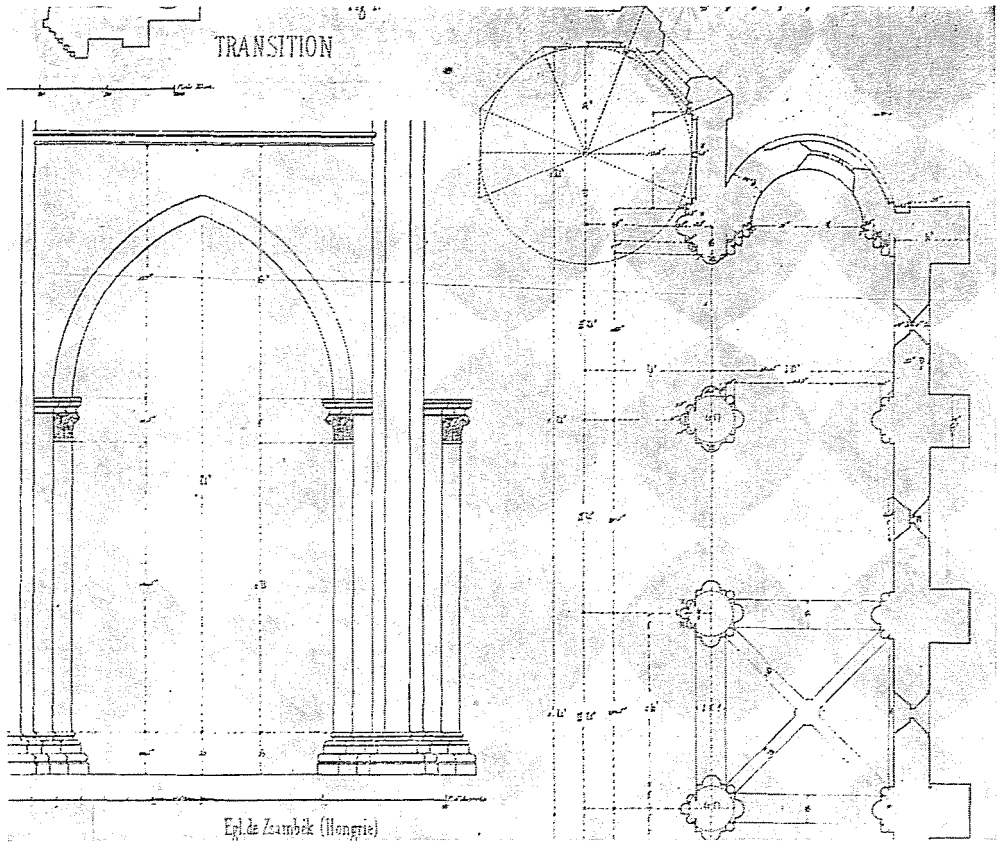


Fig. 16. Detail of the study of the proportion system of the church of Zsámbék, Hungary. From "Theory of Architecture" by Imre Henszlmann

the "Centralcommission für Erforschung und Erhaltung der Baudenkmäler" established in Vienna in 1851. It was only in 1872 that the Hungarian organization "Temporary Committee for Hungarian Monuments" has become independent. Formulation of the Monuments' Act, establishment of the National Commission of Monuments in 1882 are mainly due to suggestions of Henszlmann, to his Bill submitted as a representative of Mohács, and his interpellations.

He was all his life an "executive", in fact, organizer of the National Committee of Monuments, founder of the Hungarian monuments preservation. "Artistic judgment arisen from his extended aesthetic activities, engineering approach due to his fundamental education in natural sciences, an archaeological and art historical research method to look after the historical substance of monuments, many-sided European erudition, organizing abilities arisen from

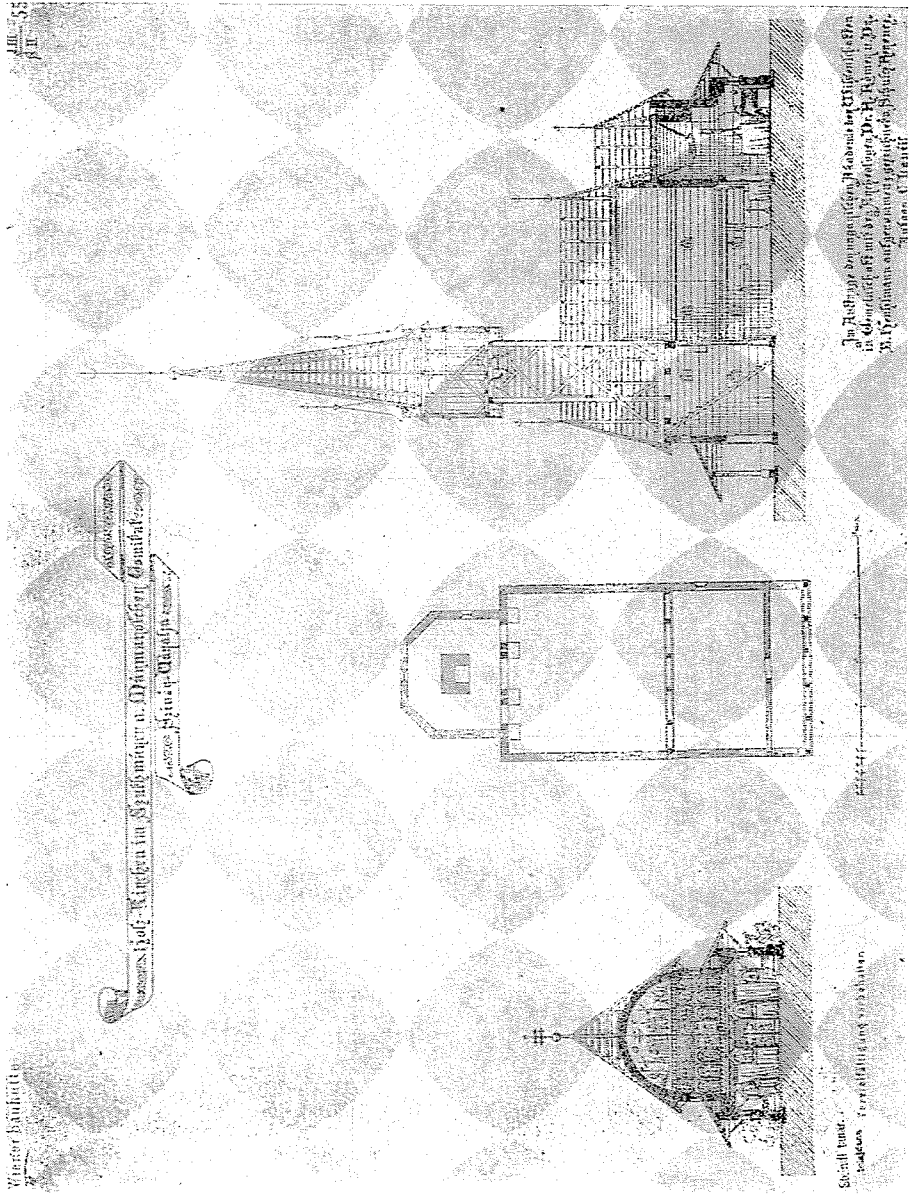


Fig. 17. Survey of an architectural remnant with the participation of Imre Henszlmann. Wooden church in NE Hungary

his public activities" permitted him to become a determinant personality of the first two decades of monuments preservation in this country.

He considered his first duty to make a convenient synoptical cadastrage of monuments, where teachers, schoolmasters, parsons, painters, landowners, historians, etc. were his "associates" who filled the distributed record sheets, sent in drawings, surveys to create the first Hungarian monuments' cadaster, continuously published in the periodical "Archaeologiai Értesítő".

Principles of this recording have been outlined by Henszlmann; exclusively antique and mediaeval architectural monuments were of interest for him, among Renaissance monuments only those perfectly "in style"; outstanding creations had been considered to be worth of preservation.

Also survey of wooden churches, belonging to a genre nowadays considered as "vernacular monuments", has started. In the first two decades of its existence, the National Committee of Monuments has also started systematic survey of monuments.

Architects such as Ferenc Schulz, first professor of architecture at the Technical University; students in architecture at the Technical University led by Imre Steindl; outsiders such as Victor Myskovszky, Gusztáv Zofahl and others joined the works of "architectural survey of monuments".

The collected over 900 survey drawings were displayed at exhibitions in 1878 and in 1880.

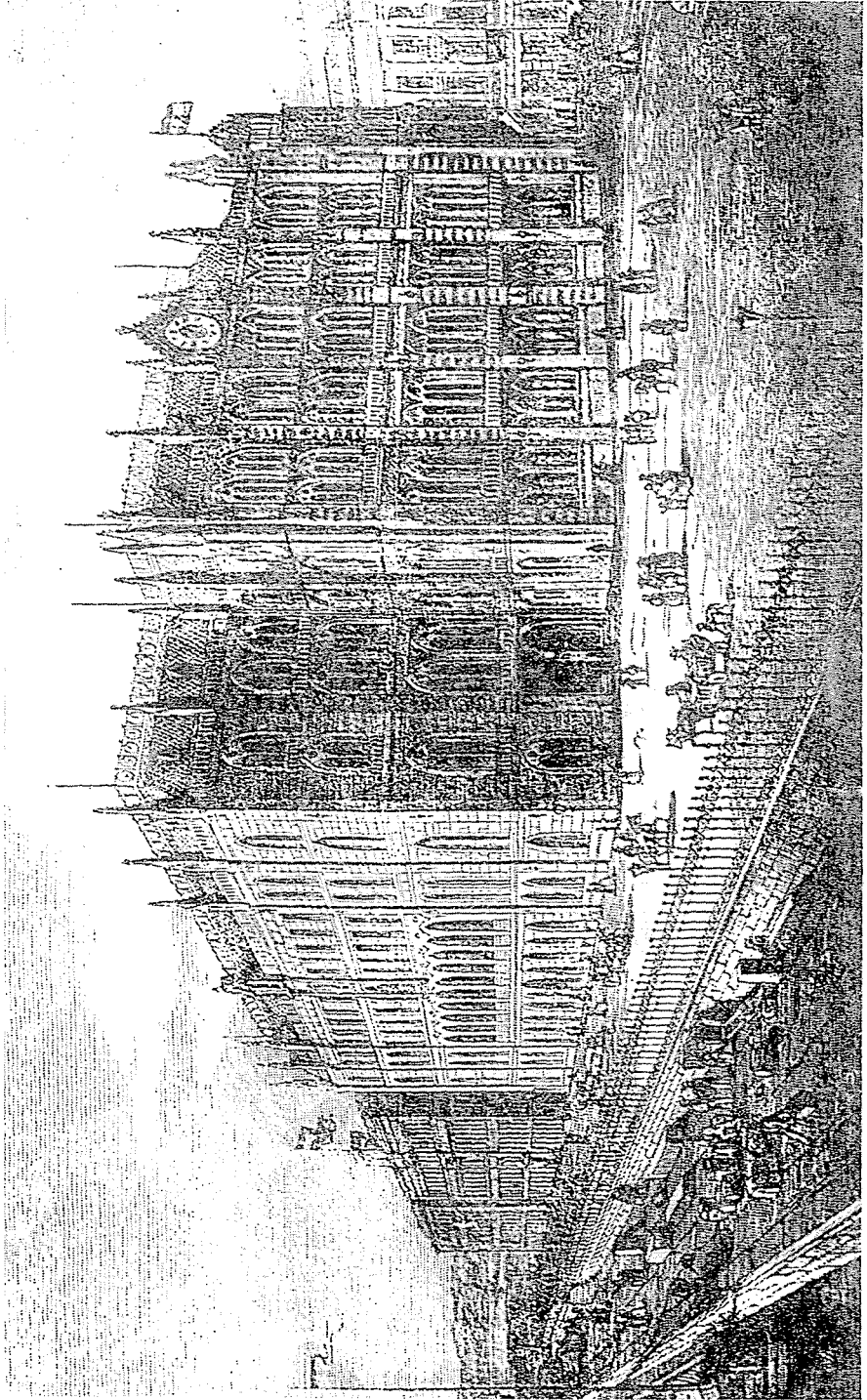
Henszlmann understood "restoration" of monuments as a possibly perfect maintenance, restitution of the disclosed original condition. Methods of "puristic" monument reconstructions as practiced in this country were rather opposed to his views; these, however, mostly started in the '90s, after the decease of Henszlmann and reorganization of the National Committee of Monuments.

Imre Henszlmann and the Architecture

Obviously, an important factor of the variegated and rich activity of Henszlmann was his interest in architecture.

His activity as a researcher in architecture started at a time when throughout Europe, "the idea of development entrained the interest even of architects brought up on classic examples, proportions, to discover Middle Ages by and by divided to Romanesque, Transitory and Gothic periods. Ancient building systems are "reborn". But creations of that age reveal busy studies in libraries rather than artistic invention".

The type of "scholarly architect" comes about, the first societies for monuments preservation are established, survey, "purification", "stylish" completion or reconstruction of castles and churches begins.



*Fig. 18. Design for the seat of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences by Imre Henszlmann, with co-designing architects Gerster and Frey.
(Perspective view taken from a review)*

This generation of researcher architects — including also Henszlmann — was not yet brought up to scholarly thinking, but on works of great thinkers, scholars, and on the field study of given monuments in academic spirit.

“Conquistadores” of the history of arts (hence, of architecture) disclosed monuments themselves, they established first value orders, and they kept in mind the demand for integrity, completeness even in the positivist disclosure of details.

Henszlmann may be considered as such a “scholarly” architect of the century, a theoretician of architecture, due to the unique creative character of his analyses in history and theory of architecture. He has published reconstruction drawings of his disclosures. He has developed a theoretical reconstruction of the first cathedral in Kalocsa, of the sepulchral chapel of King Louis the Great in Székesfehérvár, the “ideal design” of the cathedral in Kassa. He was a co-worker of the first reconstruction of the cathedral of Kassa, and it was according to his designs that the earlier single roof, was replaced by tile roofing after the 1846 fire.

He participated in architectural debates of his age, he was founding member of the Hungarian Association of Engineers and Architects where he regularly submitted critical reviews of the contemporary architecture.

By the early '60s, he joined as an “architect” Joseph Hild in the building committee of the St. Stephen's Cathedral in Pest-Lipótváros. The theory by Henszlmann of the “four-towered Hungarian cathedral” is likely to have influenced Hild's design of a four-towered “Basilica”.

As a “scholarly” architect, he had been invited to elaborate the function plan of the proposed seat of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He was also invited among the designers. He joined practicing architects to elaborate plans for the building — actually lost or hidden. This Neo-Gothic design has raised one of the keenest debates of the second half of the past century. Although at last, the “pompous” Neo-Renaissance building by Fr. Stüler, architect from Berlin, has been adopted, that by now acts somewhat provincial, Henszlmann had a fundamental share in creating its functional floor plan.

This short review presents a few items of the extremely rich *œuvre* of Imre Henszlmann. A mere sketchy biography is required to point out his activities as an aesthetician, architecture theoretician, architecture historian, a publicist, an art critic and organizer, an archaeologist.

All these have to be considered against the correlations of his age to trace his full career — due since long — from modern aspects.

His scientific and practical activities and creativeness homogenize theory and practice, aesthetics and descriptive history of architecture, theoretical research and university education, practice of monuments preservation and of architecture.

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* In Hungarian