



HOTZ, ALBERT PAUL HERMAN

HOTZ, ALBERT PAUL HERMAN, a Dutch collector and trader (b. Rotterdam, 22 January 1855; d. Cologne, near Geneva, 11 April 1930). Hotz was raised in an affluent Dutch family of Swiss origin. As a young man he traveled throughout western Europe, learning several languages and mingling with all classes of society. This led to his passion for adventure and travel, and a desire to see and explore distant lands, particularly Persia.

In 1874, at the age of nineteen, he traveled to Bušehr in Persia, where there was a resident Dutch consul, and went on to live and work in the country, mainly as a trader, for thirty years. During this time, he explored a major part of Persia on horseback or by horse-driven carriages, calling himself “a Persian from a distant land” (*yek Irāni az sarzamin-e dur*). He developed a strong affinity with Persian culture and people, and was recognized as a knowledgeable and honest merchant, with trade outlets in Tehran, Isfahan, and many other cities (Forṣat, p. 593). He was on friendly terms with Mirzā ‘Ali-As‘gar Khan Amin-al-Solṭān, and Ṣell-al-Solṭān, the eldest son of Nāṣer-al-Din Shah (qq.v.), as well as with many other Persian personalities (Engelberts, p. 37).

In 1883 Hotz, acting as a Commissioner of the Persian Government, participated in the International Colonial Exhibition in Amsterdam where Persian goods were on display (Engelberts, p. 37). In 1889, he was appointed director of the Imperial Bank of Persia, playing a practical role in restructuring and modernizing the financial management of the Persian economy (Engelberts, pp. 47-59).



He ended his activities in Persia in 1903, but was later appointed Consul General of The Netherlands in Beirut. In 1921, he retired from work and spent the remainder of his life arranging and cataloguing his numerous collections. In 1885, he donated his collection of Persian textiles, ceremonial axes, and other objects to the Ethnological Museum of Rotterdam (Engelberts, p. 38). His book collection, consisting of some 5,700 titles in almost 16,000 volumes, mainly on the history and culture of Persia, but published in Europe, is one of the largest of its kind. His self-designed ex-libris, stamped on the first page of all his books, bears the phrase “A Persian from a distant land,” which is written in hieroglyphics.

Some 700 selected titles in about 1,000 volumes, primarily about the history, geography, and anthropology of Persia, were donated by Hotz to the Royal Geographical Society in London, in 1925. He also gave to the Society his collection of seventy-three old maps of Persia (‘Alā’i, pp. 88-89). The rest of his books—about 5,000 titles in 15,000 volumes—together with eighty boxes, containing his private letters, notes, and other documents, were donated by his widow, in 1935, to the Leiden University Library. His collection of seventy-eight old prints of ancient monuments in Persia and four watercolors, showing different places in Isfahan and Qom and painted by Hofsted van Essen, were also given to the same library.

His photograph collection of 1,159 images of Persian people, monuments, buildings, etc., taken primarily during the 1890s, is quite impressive. Most of these pictures were made by Hotz himself during his frequent journeys throughout Persia. The remainder were taken by a few professional European photographers, and Hotz acquired them to complete his collection. In 1995, an exhibition was set up in the Leiden University Library showing a selection of these images (Vuurman and Martens).

Hotz is the author of at least twelve published books and articles that mainly deal with Persia and the Persian Gulf, including titles such as *A New Book about Persia* (Hotz, 1896), and *Persian Trade Routes* (Hotz, 1899). The book on the history of the Dutch East India Company in Persia is partly based on data compiled by Hotz (Dunlop, I, sections 1611-38). For the complete list of his main publications, see Engelberts, pp. 113-14.



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(Cyrus Ala'i)

December 11, 2006