

## **Medieval Art, Modern Politics**

# **Sense, Matter, and Medium**



New Approaches to Medieval Literary and Material Culture

Edited by

Fiona Griffiths, Beatrice Kitzinger, and Kathryn Starkey

## **Volume 11**

# Medieval Art, Modern Politics



Edited by  
Brigitte Buettner and William J. Diebold

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# Contributors

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## I Introduction



Brigitte Buettner and William Diebold

# Medieval Art, Modern Politics: A Short Introduction

“All thoughts about the Middle Ages are implicitly or explicitly engaged with the modern.”<sup>1</sup> With this striking claim, the medieval historian Otto Gerhard Oexle argued that, since the Middle Ages is a modern invention, medievalists must take modernity into account. The semiotician, novelist, and cultural critic Umberto Eco thought no differently when he wrote of a “continuous return” to and of the Middle Ages: “Modern ages have revisited the Middle Ages from the moment when, according to historical handbooks, they came to an end.”<sup>2</sup> Both authors recognized that the relationship between medieval and modern is dialectical rather than oppositional: one does not exist without the other. Our opening sentence can therefore be turned on its head to say that the Middle Ages has functioned as a foundational myth for modernity. But the relationship of medieval to modern is never straightforward or fixed; it evolves over the centuries, sometimes imperceptibly, sometimes abruptly. As Eco put it: “Since the Middle Ages have always been messed up in order to meet the vital requirements of different periods, it was impossible for them to be always messed about in the same way.”<sup>3</sup>

Even before Italian humanists in the mid-fourteenth century invented the Middle Ages as a distinct period and negatively labeled them “Dark Ages,” the visual culture of the preceding centuries was continually being invented and reinvented.<sup>4</sup> This reception process continued through the early modern period to reach a peak during the second half of the nineteenth century, a period marked by intense historicism. The active engagement with medieval art and architecture did not cease then. Quite the contrary, as the bulk of this volume’s essays, focused on the period from 1850 to 2000, forcefully evinces. Together, the contributions in *Medieval Art, Modern Politics* demonstrate that, like anything from the past, medieval art was never experienced “as is”: it was always mediated to suit the needs of the moment. This is the theme at the heart of this volume.

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1 Otto Gerhard Oexle, “‘Das Mittelalter’—Bilder gedeuteter Geschichte,” in *Gebrauch und Missbrauch des Mittelalters, 19.-21. Jahrhundert/ Uses and Abuses of the Middle Ages: 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> Century/ Usages et Mésusages du Moyen Age du XIXe au XXI siècle*, ed. Janos Bak et al. (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2009): 21–43, at 32.

2 Umberto Eco, “Dreaming of the Middle Ages,” in Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality*, trans. William Weaver (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986), 65.

3 Eco, “Dreaming,” 68.

4 Seminal is Theodore E. Mommsen, “Petrarch’s Conception of the Dark Ages,” *Speculum* 17 (1942): 226–42.

The essays assembled here contribute to the reception history of medieval art. However, they do so with a twist: an emphasis on political goals and ideological agendas rather than on (supposedly) disinterested aesthetic pursuits. Together, they demonstrate that in their long afterlives, medieval buildings, images, and objects proved sufficiently malleable to fit the most diverse political circumstances and respond to contrasting ideological configurations, right and left, fascist and republican, czarist and communist, religious and secular. This is not the first publication to recognize the close, ideologically fraught entanglement between the Middle Ages and modern politics. The reuse of the Middle Ages in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a force shaping historical developments has been well studied, as has the place of the medieval in the resurgent neo-fascist rhetoric in Europe and the United States.<sup>5</sup> But the same cannot be said for art-historical perspectives. While there has been engagement with recent appropriations of the visual legacy of the Middle Ages in popular culture, the political afterlife of medieval art has not often been examined in English-language scholarship.<sup>6</sup> To emphasize how the visual and architectural legacy of the past has been instrumentalized to *do* things in the present, *Medieval Art, Modern Politics* moves away from histories of taste, aesthetics, and ideas that minimize, ignore, or even suppress ideological factors at play in reception history. It stresses instead how restoring, rebuilding, studying, copying, mimicking, exhibiting, and disseminating medieval structures and artifacts served local, regional, and national agendas in the post-medieval era.

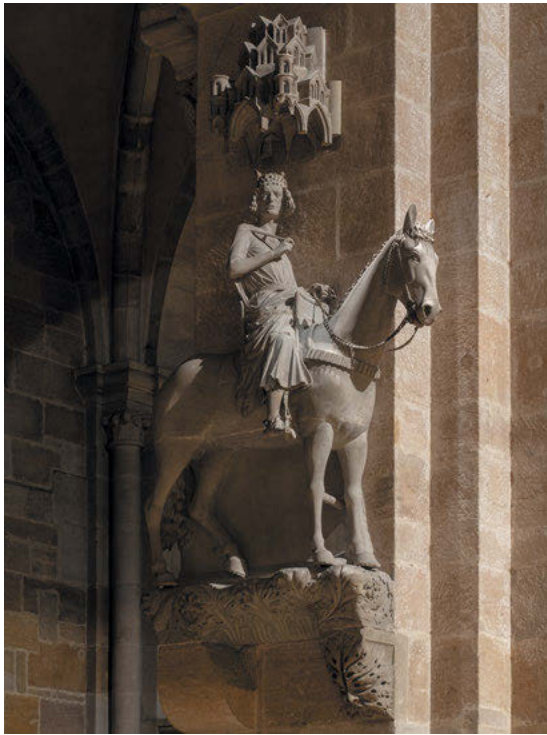
Eco gave the title “Dreaming of the Middle Ages” to his essay enumerating ten ways in which the Middle Ages have been “messed up” by modernity. Despite his slightly jocular tone, Eco insisted that the various ideological constructions of the Middle Ages met “vital requirements.” Tommaso di Carpegna Falconieri, in his pointedly titled *The Militant Middle Ages*, was more explicit. As he saw it, since the very idea of the Middle Ages

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5 Among the growing literature, see, for example, Bruce W. Holsinger, *Neomedievalism, Neoconservatism, and the War on Terror* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2007); Andrew B. R. Elliott, *Medievalism, Politics and Mass Media: Appropriating the Middle Ages in the Twenty-First Century* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 2017); Daniel Wollenberg, *Medieval Imagery in Today's Politics* (Leeds: ARC Humanities Press, 2018); and Karl Fugelso, ed., “Politics and Medievalism,” special issue, *Studies in Medievalism* 29 (2020).

6 Exceptions include Maggie M. Williams, “‘Celtic’ Crosses and the Myth of Whiteness,” in *Whose Middle Ages? Teachable Moments for an Ill-Used Past*, ed. Andrew Albin et al. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019), 220–32, and individual contributions to: Enrico Castenuovo and Giuseppe Sergi, eds., *Arti e storia nel medioevo*, vol. 4, *Il Medioevo al passato e al presente* (Turin: G. Einaudi, 2004); Janet T. Marquardt and Alyce A. Jordan, eds., *Medieval Art and Architecture after the Middle Ages* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2009); Jennifer Feltman and Sarah Thompson, eds., *The Long Lives of Medieval Art and Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2019); Catherine E. Karkov, Anna Klosowska, and Vincent W.J. van Gerven Oei, eds., *Disturbing Times: Medieval Pasts, Reimagined Futures* (Goleta: Punctum Books, 2020); and “Race, Racism, and the Middle Ages” and “Gender, Sexism, and the Middle Ages,” *The Public Medievalist*, <https://www.publicmedievalist.com/>.

was “born under the sign of opposition,” politics are embedded in it.<sup>7</sup> Consider the case of Berthold Hinz. At the meeting of the association of German art historians in 1970, in the wake of the societal upheavals and student protests of 1968, he read a paper on the thirteenth-century statue known as the Bamberg Rider (Fig. 1.1).<sup>8</sup> This is a canonical work of medieval art and Hinz’s approach to it, inspired by traditional German source critique, was to review relevant literature. His paper thus seemed uncontroversial: art-historical business as usual. But the reaction was negative in the extreme; there was uproar in the lecture hall and the story soon reached the national



**Fig. 1.1:** Bamberg Rider, Bamberg Cathedral. Photo: Reinhard Möller/Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 4.0 International).

<sup>7</sup> Tommaso di Carpegna Falconieri, *The Militant Middle Ages: Contemporary Politics between New Barbarians and Modern Crusaders*, trans. Andrew M. Hiltzik (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 4.

<sup>8</sup> Berthold Hinz, “Der Bamberger Reiter,” in *Das Kunstwerk zwischen Wissenschaft und Weltanschauung*, ed. Martin Warnke (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1970), 26–44; also available as “The Bamberg Horseman,” trans. Jonathan Blower and Johanna Wild, *Art in Translation* 6 (2014): 157–79.

newspapers.<sup>9</sup> Why did this happen? Hinz examined some fifty academic and popular texts written between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries to delineate how the Gothic equestrian sculpture had been represented. Even though these writings had appeared under political systems as diverse as monarchy, dictatorship, and democracy (both the Weimar Republic and the postwar Federal Republic of Germany), Hinz showed that they used remarkably similar language to describe the Rider, often emphasizing the figure's masculine strength and nobility. This consistency was striking and worrisome, primarily because the sculpture had been heavily promoted by the Nazis and taken by many as a prefiguration of Hitler in its savior-like, muscular Aryan identity.<sup>10</sup> Before this careful analysis of the sources, the Nazi fetishization of the Rider could be dismissed as an embarrassing aberration, a plainly unacceptable polluting of medieval art by modern politics. But Hinz demonstrated that the co-option of the statue during the Third Reich was the rule, not the exception; his paper made clear that politics were inseparable from the history of the art of the Middle Ages. For many, this was intolerable. Willibald Sauerländer, a leading medieval art historian, soon to be elected president of the German art-historical association, accused Hinz of inserting politics where there ought to be only the work of art and its original historical context.<sup>11</sup> What Sauerländer refused to consider in 1970, the notion that medieval art is necessarily politicized in the modern world, this volume takes as its conceptual backbone and organizing principle.<sup>12</sup>

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9 For the debate, see Warnke, *Kunstwerk*, 45–47; Iain Boyd White, “Introduction” to Hinz, “Bamberg Horseman,” 158–59.

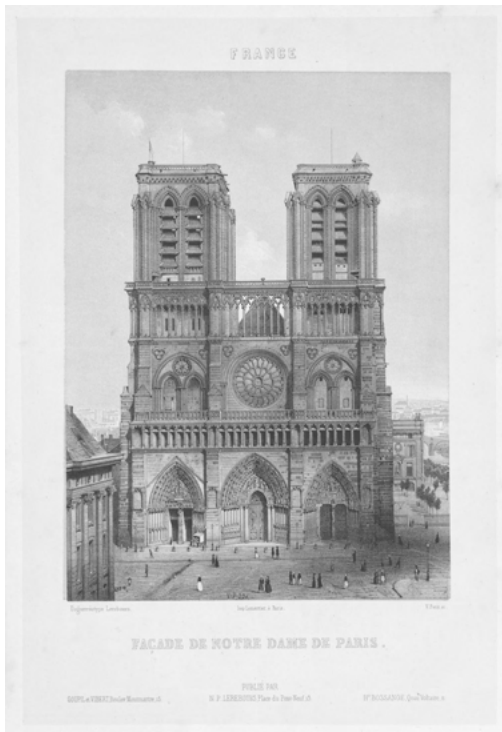
10 On the reception of the Bamberg Rider, especially in the twentieth century, see Carsten Busch, *Der Bamberger Reiter: Ein Lesebuch* (Bamberg: Colibri, n.d.); Wolfgang Ullrich, “Der Bamberger Reiter und Uta von Naumburg,” in *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte*, ed. Etienne François and Hagen Schulze (Munich: Beck, 2001), 1: 322–34; and William C. McDonald, “Concerning the Use and Abuse of a Medieval Statue from 1920–1940: The Case of the Bamberger Reiter,” *Perspicuitas*, 2010, <https://www.uni-due.de/imperia/md/content/perspicuitas/mcdonald.pdf>.

11 Willibald Sauerländer, review of *Das Kunstwerk zwischen Wissenschaft und Weltanschauung*, ed. Martin Warnke, *Kunstchronik* 23 (1970): 320–30.

12 Sauerländer himself later changed his tune. A decade after his attack on Hinz, he analyzed the different interpretations across time of the Gothic sculptures from Naumburg cathedral (discussed below) and did for them precisely what Hinz had done for the Rider. Willibald Sauerländer, “Die Naumburger Stifterfiguren,” in *Die Zeit der Staufer* (Stuttgart: Württembergisches Landesmuseum, 1979), 5: 169–245. For an examination of another canonical monument of German Gothic sculpture along methodological lines similar to those employed by Hinz and Sauerländer, see William J. Diebold, “The Magdeburg Rider on Display in Modern Germany,” in Feltman and Thompson, *Long Lives*, 227–41.

## Objects of Power/The Power of Objects

Hinz's analysis of the politics embedded in verbal descriptions of the Bamberg Rider laid bare how interpretative frameworks are never ideologically innocent. Such discourse analysis is common to many humanistic disciplines, but the political use of medieval art and architecture has a uniquely physical dimension that fundamentally separates art-historical inquiries from the study of medievalism in other fields. Nowhere has the thingness of medieval art—the symbolic weight of its concrete, material existence—been more apparent than in the fates of the images and regalia of medieval rulers. As prime actors on the social scene, emperors, kings, and queens were at the center of an extensive, multimedia visual repertoire that was political from the start. Ruler iconography and royal material culture are coterminous with politics, a trait that made them especially attractive for later ideological reinvestments.



**Fig. 1.2:** Noël-Marie-Paymal Lerebours, Facade of the Cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris showing empty Gallery of Kings; print after a daguerreotype by Vincent Chevalier from Lerebours, *Excursions daguerriennes*, ca. 1840. Photo: New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 47.152 (CC 1.0 Universal).

The facade of the cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris provides a fine example (Fig. 1.2). There, a long row of twenty-eight sculptures, each depicting a larger-than-life-size

crowned man, once spanned the entire width of the second level. These statues were intended to represent kings of the Old Testament, the ancestors of the Virgin Mary to whom the cathedral is dedicated. But when the statues were put up, an ambiguity—biblical king or king of France?—was likely encouraged, because both of the key political figures in thirteenth-century Paris, the bishop and the king, would have been eager to emphasize the close ties between church and state implied by this slippage in meaning. Modernity had no patience for such subtle hermeneutics; it insisted on disambiguating the statues. The French Revolution famously allied itself to the belief in the rights of individual citizens and so defined itself against the Ancien Régime's notion of a sacral, divinely sanctioned kingship. The conceptual and literal dismantling of a sacrosanct, absolute rulership led the revolutionaries, acting on the governmental order to eliminate "all signs of superstition and feudalism," to decapitate and then pull down the statues of the kings from their niches in a deliberate anti-royalist act of vandalism (Fig. 1.3).<sup>13</sup> That word itself was a neologism of the era, coined in 1794 by the Abbé Henri Grégoire in reports he addressed to the National Convention that were intended to stem revolutionary



**Fig. 1.3:** Heads from Gallery of Kings of the Cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris, Paris, Musée de Cluny. Photo: Wikimedia Commons/Connie Ma (CC BY-SA 2.0 Generic).

<sup>13</sup> Carmen Gómez-Moreno, *Sculpture from Notre-Dame, Paris: A Dramatic Discovery* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1979), 8–10, citation at 8; Michel Fleury, "Histoire d'un crime," in *Notre-Dame de Paris: Les rois retrouvés* (Paris: Joël Cuénot, 1977), 14–23. During the second half of the nineteenth century, modern replacements for each king were restored to the facade.



excesses and the resulting wholesale destruction of monuments linked to the church and monarchy. The parallelism with the Vandals of the early Middle Ages, who overran southern France and Spain before settling along the North African coast, was deliberate, for that group had come to emblemize in French historiography the lawlessly destructive “barbarian” forces of the so-called Dark Ages. The term was adopted overnight in France and beyond, with the objections of some German scholars about such an overt denigration of “Germanic” people doing nothing to stem its success.<sup>14</sup>

In the wake of the French Revolution, medieval kingship was often viewed positively by moderns of a more conservative stamp, who understood it, aspirationally, as offering a Christian political template in direct opposition to the “pagan” Roman republican model. Appropriating the regalia that literally objectified the power of mythologized models of medieval charismatic statesmanship could therefore be seen as a way to tap into the quasi-supernatural power of kings and emperors at a moment when absolute rights to rule came under heavy pressure. This was not a phenomenon limited to the age of kings: in 1927, the heyday of Germany’s Weimar Republic, the cultural historian Ernst Kantorowicz began his biography of the twelfth-century emperor Frederick II by writing: “Enthusiasm is astir for the great German rulers of the past: precisely at a time when there are no more emperors.”<sup>15</sup> The suite of objects associated with the Holy Roman Empire, the so-called *Reichskleinodien* (imperial treasures) created under the Ottonian and Salian rulers during the tenth and eleventh centuries, fulfilled this retroactive, self-legitimizing function most powerfully. Napoleon I, who abolished the German empire in 1806, harbored plans to lay his hands on the hallowed imperial crown, scepter, orb, and sword for his coronation at Notre-Dame in 1804, barely a decade after the iconoclasts had decapitated the kings on the cathedral’s facade. Various Prussian kings of the house of Hohenzollern entertained similar ambitions. For such rulers, living in the age of the modern European nation-state but with transnational aspirations, the political relics associated with the Holy Roman Empire could be seen as both pre- and multinational and so were immensely appealing.

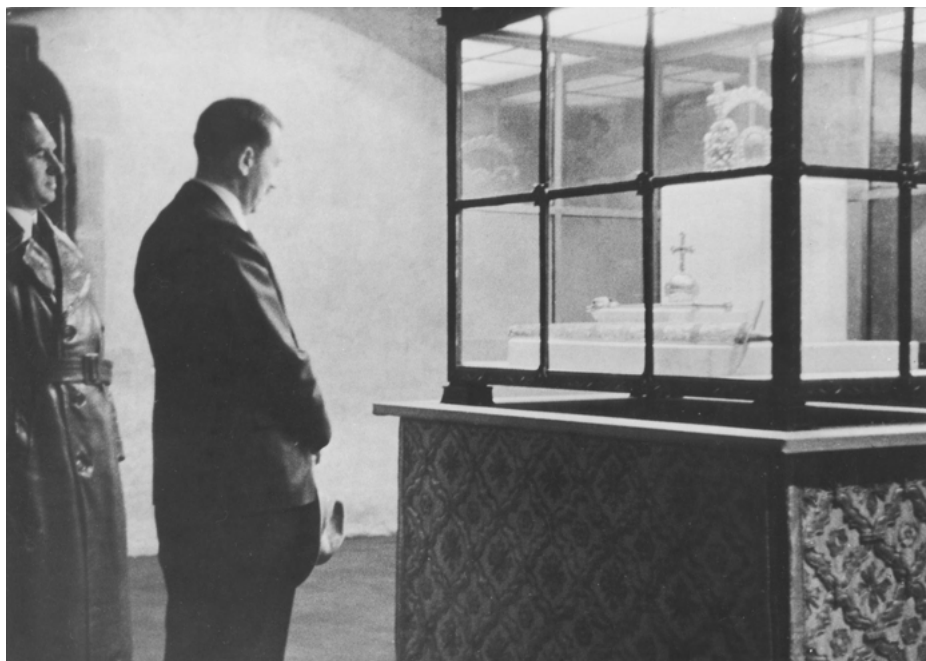
The same holds true for the *Reichskleinodien*’s most notorious would-be owner, Adolf Hitler. After annexing Austria to the so-called Third Reich in 1938, he authorized the removal of the regalia from the imperial treasury in Vienna to one of their former homes, the imperial city (*Reichsstadt*) Nuremberg. This transfer fulfilled a longstanding dream. Fifteen years earlier, in *Mein Kampf*, Hitler had swooned over the “marvelous magic” exerted by the imperial insignia, while in his 1938 speech announcing

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14 A.H. Merrills, “The Origins of ‘Vandalism,’” *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 16 (2009): 155–75.

15 Ernst Kantorowicz, *Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite* (Berlin: G. Bondi, 1931), 7. See also Martin A. Ruehl, “‘In This Time without Emperors’: The Politics of Ernst Kantorowicz’s *Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite* Reconsidered,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 63 (2000): 187–242.

their acquisition, he claimed that their removal to Nuremberg demonstrated that “over five hundred years before the discovery of the New World, there was a mighty German empire . . . For a long while the German empire slumbered. The German people are now awake and have given themselves its thousand-year-old crown to wear.”<sup>16</sup> The insignia, which some fantasized might ensure the triumph of another “Thousand-Year Reich,” were to be exhibited on altar-like pedestals in the fifty-thousand-seat, colosseum-like Congress Hall where the Nazi party was slated to hold its massive annual gatherings (*Reichsparteitage*). Since the building was then still under construction, the imperial treasure was put on show in a carefully orchestrated display in a Nuremberg church (Fig. 1.4). But that proved an ephemeral affair. As the Allied bombings grew in intensity, city officials decided to bring the irreplaceable objects to safety. Protected in purpose-built copper containers, the *Reichskleinodien*



**Fig. 1.4:** Adolf Hitler viewing *Reichskleinodien* in St. Catherine's Church, Nuremberg, 1938. Photo: Ullstein bild/Granger.

<sup>16</sup> These quotations are from Christian Hartmann et al., eds., *Hitler, Mein Kampf: Eine kritische Edition* (Munich: Institut für Zeitgeschichte, 2016), 1:115; Christian Kohler, *Ein ruhiges Fortbestehen? Das Germanische Nationalmuseum im "Dritten Reich"* (Berlin: LIT, 2011), 56.

spent the remaining war years immured in underground bunkers until American troops located them and brought them back to Vienna.<sup>17</sup>

Napoleon and Hitler were, like many moderns, generally skeptical of religion (except when it was politically expedient to attend to it). A good deal of historical amnesia was thus at play in their interest in the imperial artifacts, given that kingship in the Middle Ages was a decidedly religious affair and the *Reichskleinodien* included reliquaries as well as political insignia. Other moderns who used regalia from the Middle Ages recognized and indeed capitalized on this entwinement of church and state. In 1953, with the Cold War in full swing, the Crown of St. Stephen and other Hungarian crown jewels were sent from the American zone of occupation in Austria to the United States, which had been their de facto guardian since the end of World War II. The aptly named “Operation Klondike” brought the precious treasure to Fort Knox in Kentucky, where it was safely stowed away with the US gold reserve. For the Hungarian government, threatened more and more by Soviet hegemony, this seemed the right choice; for the Americans, the United States likewise appeared to be a more suitable location than a “godless” country behind the Iron Curtain, especially since the crown had originally been a papal gift to Stephen (ca. 975–1038), who was both a king and a saint. It was only thirty-four years later, under the Carter Administration, and thanks to the lobbying efforts of the Hungarian government of János Kádár, the sustained mediation of the Vatican, and consideration of American economic interests in Eastern Europe, that the decision was taken to return these crown jewels. This was done despite significant resistance in Congress and from Hungarian-Americans opposed to overtures to their now-Communist country of origin (post-election polling data even suggest that this opposition played a role in Carter’s defeat by Ronald Reagan in the 1980 presidential election). In 1978, however, the Crown of St. Stephen and the rest of the coronation treasure returned home to great acclaim and festivities reminiscent of medieval triumphal entries. As the symbolic centerpiece of Hungarian sovereignty, the crown is to this day ceremoniously displayed in the large domed hall of the (neo-medieval) Hungarian Parliament building in Budapest.<sup>18</sup>

The political scientist Benedict Anderson has argued that the disappearance of the “dynastic realms” of medieval western Europe helped to prepare the way for one of the key features of the modern world: nationalism.<sup>19</sup> The travails of the *Reichskleinodien* and the Crown of St. Stephen bolster Anderson’s claim; they indicate that those realms

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17 Klaus-Peter Schroeder, “Die Nürnberger Reichskleinodien in Wien: Ein Beitrag zur ‘großdeutschen’ Rechts- und Zeitgeschichte,” *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte* 108 (1991): 323–46, at 323–29.

18 Katalin Kádár Lynn, “The Return of the Crown of St. Stephen and its Subsequent Impact on the Carter Administration,” *East European Quarterly* 34 (2000): 181–215; Peter Sarros, *US-Vatican Relations, 1975–1980: A Diplomatic Study* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2020), 136–57.

19 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991), 19–22.

may have disappeared, but the insignia that once represented them still exist in the modern world and, more than any other type of object, lend themselves to be co-opted for new national discourses. It was not only royal and imperial images and objects, however, that attracted political attention in postmedieval times. Lesser nobles proved at least as popular in the chivalric revivalist mood of an increasingly bourgeois world, claiming a significant share of space in the nineteenth-century historical imagination. The twelve life-size polychrome figures of church founders that line the western choir of the cathedral of Naumburg in eastern Germany provide a striking case. The best-known of these mid-thirteenth-century statues depict Uta, the marchioness of Ballenstedt, alongside her husband, Ekkehard. Since the late nineteenth century, Uta and her companions had been seen, like the slightly earlier Bamberg Rider, as a high watermark of German art and culture. As such, Uta was mobilized in the infamous 1937 Munich exhibition *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerate Art) organized by the Nazis to defame modernist art. She appeared in a large photograph as an iconic—courtly, elegant, and yet wholesome—German Frau, a counterpoint to the rest of the pictures on display, many of which featured more or less distorted female bodies. The sculpture from Naumburg, the single positive image in what was otherwise a viciously denunciatory exhibition, stood in the exhibition for Art itself.<sup>20</sup>

This was a ringing, if radically disturbing, assertion of the positive value of the Middle Ages against modernity. It was not to be Uta's only public appearance in Munich in 1937. *Degenerate Art* was paired with an exhibition designed to broadcast the Nazis' approved answer to avant-garde art. This official (though less visited) show opened during a three-day-long festival, the "Day of German Art," that featured a bombastic parade illustrating two thousand years of German history. Filing past the honor stand crammed with Nazi officials and their guests, the procession wound its way for more than two hours through the streets of Munich.<sup>21</sup> In this mass public spectacle, which mixed over three thousand participants with colored plaster facsimiles of famous works of art, a replica of Uta and her companions figured on one of the

20 For Uta in *Degenerate Art*, see Mario-Andreas von Lüttichau and Andreas Hüneke, "Rekonstruktion der Ausstellung 'Entartete Kunst,'" in *Nationsozialismus und "Entartete Kunst,"* ed. Peter-Klaus Schuster, rev. ed. (Munich: Prestel, 1998), 120–182b, at 182a; Wolfgang Ullrich, *Uta von Naumburg: Eine deutsche Ikone* (Berlin: Klaus Wagenbach, 1998), 43–47; Stefan Schweizer, "Unserer Weltanschauung sichtbaren Ausdruck geben": *Nationalsozialistische Geschichtsbilder in historischen Festzügen zum "Tag der Deutschen Kunst"* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007), 160. On the modern reception of the Naumburg figures in general, see Ullrich, "Bamberger Reiter und Uta"; Jens-Fietje Dwars and Siegfried Wagner, *Fortgesetzte Spiegelungen* (Naumburg: Stadtmuseum Naumburg, 2011); and Jacqueline E. Jung, "The Work of Gothic Sculpture in the Age of Photographic Reproduction," in *The Lives and Afterlives of Medieval Iconography*, ed. Pamela A. Patton and Henry D. Schilb (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2021), 162–99.

21 Schweizer, "Unserer Weltanschauung,"; Joshua Hagen, "Parades, Public Space, and Propaganda: The Nazi Culture Parades in Munich," *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* 90 (2008): 349–67.

ten floats embodying the “Romanesque” age, the largest section of the entire procession. The focus here was distinctly political (Charlemagne, Widukind, Barbarossa, Henry the Lion, and other rulers of the “First Reich”) and, as with the Naumburg sculptures, chivalric. Everything, in other words, was carefully tailored to minimize religion and enshrine “Germanness” as a supreme, unifying value in its stead.

The parade was judged to be extremely successful and was repeated in 1938 and 1939 in a somewhat revised form. Most interesting for our discussion is that the *Reichskleinodien*, absent in 1937, were given a prominent place in the subsequent versions in the wake of their transfer to Nuremberg after the German *Anschluss* of Austria. Facsimiles of the imperial crown, scepter, and orb were carried in a glass shrine, presumably to personify the absorption of the Hapsburg territory and the Holy Roman Empire into the so-called Third Reich (Fig. 1.5).<sup>22</sup> The parade’s official program called the crown the “most fateful and sacred treasure in the procession.”<sup>23</sup> So overdetermined was the aura of the *Reichskleinodien* that, although the Nazis placed great em-



**Fig. 1.5:** Facsimiles of *Reichskleinodien* in the procession for *Tag der deutschen Kunst*, Munich, 10 July 1938; photograph by Götz. Photo: Munich, Stadtarchiv DE-1992-FS-NS-00400.

<sup>22</sup> Annelies Amberger, “Reichskleinodien und Hakenkreuz: Heilige Insignien und bildhafte Symbole im Dienste der Nationalsozialisten,” *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* 38 (2011): 271–334, at 282–94.

<sup>23</sup> *Zweitausend Jahre Deutsche Kultur: Festzug am Tag der Deutschen Kunst 1939 zu München* (Munich: Knorr & Hirth, 1939), 23.

phasis on the originals, even these replicas, made in 1915 at the behest of Emperor Wilhelm II, could do the job. Given the continuity in history they symbolized (where, in reality, there was none), it is no surprise that, during the Second World War, these same facsimiles of the imperial regalia featured in the “German Greatness” exhibition that traveled across Germany and its new conquests, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, and France, between 1940 and 1942.<sup>24</sup> In Spain in 1942, the Franco regime enacted something similar with the so-called Victory Cross, made in the tenth century. Kept in the freshly restored Cámara Santa (cathedral treasury) of Oviedo, which had been blown up during a revolutionary uprising by Asturian miners in 1934, the splendid *crux gemmata* was paraded through the streets to celebrate the eleven-hundredth anniversary of the death of the Asturian king Alfonso II—and, through that act of public commemoration, Spanish national identity. Contrary to the German replicas, the real thing was used in this case, with Franco carrying it into the cathedral.<sup>25</sup>

Although the Bamberg Rider did not appear in the processions for the “Day of German Art,” it was too central to Nazi thinking about both art and nation (for them, inseparable concepts) to be entirely absent. The parade’s program refers to it in the introduction, bluntly styling the commanding equestrian statue as the “proud assertion of the race.”<sup>26</sup> In 1940, the Rider and Uta of Naumburg were again commandeered to team up, this time in Fritz Hippler’s horrifically anti-Semitic propaganda movie *Der ewige Jude* (The Wandering Jew). In one sequence, a grotesque piece of trick photography made it seem that the two were actually a single work of art, with Uta seated directly behind the Rider (Fig. 1.6). In the film, this confected knight and his lady represented what were held to be quintessentially German cultural expressions (the music accompanying their appearance was by Johann Sebastian Bach) and, in a painfully obvious message, were shown confronting creations like those displayed in *Degenerate Art*, which were commonly libeled as having been produced by Jewish artists, who were denounced as rootless and cosmopolitan.<sup>27</sup>

Nazi thought made race central to everything. Yet this is only one, if particularly strident, example of the powerful and persistent racialized distortion of medieval art in modern times, and many contributions to *Medieval Art, Modern Politics* address racial and ethnic identities. The essays by Lamprakos and Moreno Martín demonstrate how the preservation of the medieval heritage in Spain was affected by the ongoing

24 William J. Diebold, “The High Middle Ages on Display in the Exhibition *Deutsche Größe* (1940–1942),” in *Mittelalterbilder im Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Maike Steinkamp and Bruno Reudenbach (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2013), 103–17.

25 Matilde Mateo, “The Victory Cross Redux: Ritual, Memory, and Politics in the Aftermath of the Spanish Civil War,” in Feltman and Thompson, *Long Lives*, 209–26.

26 *Zweitausend Jahre Deutsche Kultur*, 8.

27 Dwars and Wagner, *Fortgesetzte Spiegelungen*, 45; Assaf Pinkus, “Imaginative Responses to Gothic Sculpture: The Bamberg Rider,” *Viator* 45 (2014), 331–60, at 331–32.



**Fig. 1.6:** Still from *Der ewige Jude* (The Wandering Jew), dir. Fritz Hippler, 1940, showing montage of Bamberg Rider and Uta of Naumburg. Photo: Smith College Imaging Center/Nora Davies (public domain).

tensions between the recognition of the seminal contribution of Islamic architectural traditions in Al-Andalus and its suppression. Ethnic and religious identity likewise play a central role in van der Meulen's examination of the restoration of Gothic churches in Poland after the Second World War, an otherwise paradoxical phenomenon given that country's socialist and secular regime. The belief that America in the first half of the twentieth century was racially and ethnically linked to Carolingian Europe, a bizarre idea that prefigures more recent co-options of the European Middle Ages by neo-fascist movements, is the subject of Danielson's paper.<sup>28</sup> One particularly noxious result of the distinctively modern combination of racism and nationalism was colonialism; its impact on the reception and revival of medieval architecture would be deep and lasting. Postcolonial analysis informs both Foletti's discussion of the imposition of the neo-Byzantine style on countries that fell under Soviet influence and Mavromatidis and Villano's account of how Britain and France maneu-

<sup>28</sup> For the association of the Gothic with American attitudes towards race, see Joshua Davies, "Confederate Gothic," in Karkov, Kłosowska, and van Gerven Oei, *Disturbing Times*, 247–84.

vered archaeological discoveries of medieval funerary monuments on Cyprus to suit their own political ambitions in the wider eastern Mediterranean.<sup>29</sup>

## Medieval Art and the Invention of Tradition

The chronological compass of our volume shows that *all* eras of the Middle Ages, from late antiquity to the fifteenth century, were likely to be interpreted through the prism of modern political imperatives. The field of medieval archaeology, with its concern for what can seem literal “facts on the ground,” gave a particularly trenchant edge to the ideological recuperation of the earliest periods, what used to be called the Dark Ages or the Germanic migrations.<sup>30</sup> A comprehensive treatment of the entanglement of medieval archaeology with modern politics remains a desideratum. Suffice it here to recall a few signal examples. In 1653, a chance find near Tournai in northern France spurred one of the earliest excavations of a medieval site. It brought to light the richly appointed tomb of the Merovingian king Childeric I (d. 481). As Bonnie Effros has shown, the king’s sumptuous funerary goods quickly caught the attention of the Spanish Hapsburgs (in whose territory Tournai was located) who hoped that the possession of such early regalia and jewelry, including a signet ring and golden bees (or cicadas), could support their claim to the French throne against the reigning Bourbons.<sup>31</sup> Later, these same (or similar) bees were adopted by Napoleon I for his coronation accoutrements in a pointed rejection of the fleur-de-lis, the heraldic symbol of the French monarchy of the Ancien Régime (heraldry provides another fertile if underexplored area of modern manipulations of the Middle Ages).

The recovery of Celtic antiquities by archaeologists and collectors animated by the nascent Irish nationalist movement in the mid-nineteenth century was undertaken with a similar intent—to manufacture historical continuity—albeit with a more distinctly national emphasis. A leading figure was Charles Petrie (1790–1866), president of the Royal Hibernian Academy, archaeologist, and indefatigable crusader for the Irish ethno-cultural revival movement. Archaeology was to provide firm scientific

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<sup>29</sup> Important studies of the relationship of colonialism to medievalism are Kathleen Davis and Nadia Altschul, eds., *Medievalisms in the Postcolonial World: The Idea of “The Middle Ages” outside Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009) and Michelle R. Warren, *Creole Medievalism: Colonial France and Joseph Bédier’s Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

<sup>30</sup> For a recent discussion of the historiography, see Matthias Friedrich and James M. Harland, eds., *Interrogating the “Germanic”* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), especially Harland and Friedrich, “Introduction: The ‘Germanic’ and its Discontents,” 1–18.

<sup>31</sup> Bonnie Effros, *Merovingian Mortuary Archaeology and the Making of the Early Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 28–35. Ian Wood, *The Modern Origins of the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) offers a broad study of modern uses of early medieval history and culture.



proof of the existence of an Irish medieval heritage, consisting of a unique blend of Celtic and Christian elements. It is largely thanks to Petrie's efforts that such choice objects as the Armagh Chalice, the Cross of Cong, and Tara Brooch (all now displayed as quasi-sacral historic relics in Dublin's National Museum of Ireland) joined already well-known works such as the round towers, the monumental stone crosses, and the Book of Kells and its intricately illuminated siblings as material evidence of national identity. Celtic Revivalism then gave these works greater popular currency, as their motifs were perpetuated in jewelry, furniture design, and medievalizing products both high and low.<sup>32</sup>

In the late nineteenth century, the early Middle Ages became an even more intense ideological battleground, with the use of invented traditions and imagined communities to manufacture historical foundations and myths of origins.<sup>33</sup> To the Italians who eagerly promoted the (fictitious) continuity of their newly unified nation with imperial Rome, Germany responded by using "Germanic research" (*Germanenforschung*) to unearth vestiges of Visigothic, Ostrogothic, and Langobardic material culture in Italy. Fibulae, weapons, and architectural remains were interpreted as proof positive of a civilizing Aryan culture, a historic fantasy claimed as the bedrock for alleged Germanic racial, ethnic, and cultural superiority. A robust institutional framework supported fieldwork and publications. Especially active was Heinrich Himmler's SS-affiliated research organization *Deutsches Ahnenerbe* (German Ancestral Heritage), which entered into a formal collaboration with the German Archaeological Institute in Rome.<sup>34</sup> Tellingly, their research priorities and methods were then imported to Spain under Franco's regime.<sup>35</sup>

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32 John Hutchinson, "Archaeology and the Irish Rediscovery of the Celtic Past," *Nations and Nationalisms* 7 (2001): 505–19; Teri J. Edelstein, ed., *Imagining the Irish Past: The Celtic Revival, 1840–1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). For the slightly earlier but otherwise parallel use of Anglo-Saxon history and artifacts in support of English nationalism, see Dustin M. Frazier Wood, *Anglo-Saxonism and the Idea of Englishness in Eighteenth-century Britain* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2020), 156–96. And, more generally on this topic, Jonathan James Graham Alexander, "Medieval Art and Modern Nationalism," in *Medieval Art: Recent Perspectives*, ed. Gale R. Owen-Crocker and Timothy Graham (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 206–23.

33 These notions derive from two important books: Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) and Anderson, *Imagined Communities*. For a trenchant application of both concepts to the Middle Ages, see Patrick Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

34 Thomas Fröhlich, "The Study of the Lombards and Ostrogoths at the German Archaeological Institute of Rome, 1937–1943," in *Archaeology and National Identity in Italy and Europe, 1800–1950*, ed. Nathalie de Haan, Martijn Eickhoff, and Marjan Schwegman, special issue, *Fragmenta: Journal of the Royal Netherlands Institute in Rome* 2 (2008): 183–213; Sandra Geringer et al., eds., *Graben für Germanien: Archäologie unterm Hakenkreuz* (Stuttgart: Konrad Theiss, 2013).

35 Carlos Tejerizo García, "Nazis, visigodos y Franco: La arqueología visigoda durante el primer franquismo," in *El franquismo y la apropiación del pasado: El uso de la historia, de la arqueología y de la*

One of the Ahnenerbe's choice targets was the so-called Bayeux Tapestry. Among the most compelling visual creations of the Middle Ages, the almost seventy-meter-long embroidery also is one of the best studied in a tradition of scholarship that has gone on virtually unabated ever since nineteenth-century antiquarians pored over it.<sup>36</sup> Crucially for our purpose, the Tapestry offers not only a paradigmatic case of the continuing history of the reception of medieval art, but was the object of repeated, forceful modern acts of appropriation. Made in the late eleventh century, it records the Norman conquest of England in 1066 under William the Conqueror. While neither France nor England was at that time a nation in anything like the modern sense of the word, this did not keep the historic artifact from being used to foster national agendas from the Napoleonic era onward. On the eve of a planned French invasion of England in 1803, the fragile piece of cloth was rolled up and shipped to Paris, where it was exhibited in the brand-new Musée Central des Arts (Louvre) as a monument to the glory of ancestral "French" forces. Equally telling was the decision to print two hundred copies of the brochure that accompanied the exhibition, complete with verbal summaries of every episode preceding a foldout with an engraved reproduction of the entire embroidery. These were distributed to officers stationed in Belgium, who were looking across the Channel toward England just as William and his troops had done some eight hundred years earlier. This little publication ended on the observation that, according to the opinion of "some scholars," the Tapestry originally continued for a few more scenes, culminating with the crowning of the Norman (read French) William the Conqueror.<sup>37</sup>

For the Bayeux Tapestry, as with the imperial regalia of the Holy Roman Empire, where Napoleon first tread, the Nazis followed. They also identified themselves with the Normans, now understood as Aryan "Norsemen." And, like Napoleon, they saw the Tapestry's images resonating with their own planned invasion of England as well as providing a glorious example of military feats that bore the imprint of the "Germanic race."<sup>38</sup> On the orders of Himmler, the embroidery was extensively studied and documented in the summer of 1941 by a team of experts sent by the Ahnenerbe and led by the Viking specialist and major in the SS, Herbert Jankuhn. Attempts to remove the fragile work to Berlin failed and it eventually was brought to the Louvre for safety

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*historia del arte para la legitimación de la dictadura*, ed. Francisco J. Moreno Martín (Madrid: Editorial Pablo Iglesias, 2017), 107–36.

<sup>36</sup> Rosemary Hill, *Time's Witness: History in the Age of Romanticism* (London: Allen Lane, 2021), 121–26.

<sup>37</sup> Ennio Quirino Visconti, *Notice historique sur la tapisserie brodée par la reine Mathilde, épouse de Guillaume le Conquérant* (Paris: Imprimerie des Sciences et des Arts, 1803), 20. On Napoleon and the Tapestry, see Carola Hicks, *The Bayeux Tapestry* (London: Vintage, 2006), 95–114.

<sup>38</sup> A particularly explicit example was Rolf Roeningh, *Ein Schwert hieb über den Kanal: Die siegreiche Englandfahrt Wilhelms des Eroberers nach Bildberichten des Teppichs von Bayeux* (Berlin: Deutscher Archiv-Verlag, 1941).

in the summer of 1944.<sup>39</sup> The politicization of the Bayeux Tapestry by the Nazis did not go unnoticed by their adversaries. After the liberation of Paris on 25 August 1944, it was decided that the textile should once again be exhibited at the Louvre before returning to its permanent home in Bayeux. But the concrete historical reality of works of medieval art means that they do not always fit neatly with modern objectives. After the display opened in mid-November, with the Second World War continuing to rumble in the background, the precious eleventh-century artifact needed a bit of tweaking to accord with current political intentions. The last panel, which features the inscription *Et fuga verterunt Angli* (“And the English turned in flight”), was covered over in the Louvre’s display in 1944 because that message was deemed offensive to the English who had done so much to assist the French throughout the war.<sup>40</sup>

The blatant political use of the Tapestry has continued to the present. In 2018, France’s president, Emmanuel Macron, agreed to lend the Tapestry for display in England. In contrast to some of the other cases we discuss, there was no pretense on either side of the Channel that this was anything *but* the use of a work of medieval art in the service of modern politics. A leading British newspaper frankly opined that United Kingdom Prime Minister Theresa May “will use the [loan] decision . . . to highlight the strength in UK-French relations after Brexit.” But political rationales are rarely monolithic (and, as we have just noted, works of medieval art never speak perfectly to modern conditions). Thus, a writer on the other side of the Brexit debate gave a quite different interpretation of the loan’s significance, asserting that, since “the Bayeux tapestry shows Britain’s birth as a European nation,” it supported the position that the United Kingdom should remain in the European Union.<sup>41</sup>

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39 Shirley Ann Brown, “Sonderauftrag Bayeux’: Herbert Jeschke and the ‘Lost’ Drawings of the ‘Bayeux Tapestry,’” *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 83 (2020): 236–54, with further relevant bibliography at 252n16.

40 Iñigo Salto Santamaría, “‘Et le combat prend fin’: The Exhibition of the Bayeux Tapestry at the Louvre in 1944,” in *Arts et politiques: Le marché de l’art entre France et Allemagne de l’Entre-deux-guerres à la Libération*, ed. Julia Drost, Hélène Ivanoff and Denise Vernerey-Laplace (Heidelberg: arthistoricum.net, 2022; <https://doi.org/10.11588/arthistoricum.878>). Even in places where the Nazi use of the Bayeux Tapestry was likely not known, the parallel between the history told in the embroidery and the Allied invasion of France in 1944 proved irresistible. Already in the days and weeks after D-Day, the Tapestry was adapted by artists, notably on the cover of *The New Yorker* for 15 July 1944. For discussions of these, see Hicks, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 270–71 and R. Howard Bloch, *A Needle in the Right Hand of God* (New York, 2006), 19–20 and fig. 1.

41 Nicola Slawson and Mark Brown, “Emmanuel Macron Agrees to Lend Bayeux Tapestry to Britain” and John Lichfield, “The Bayeux Tapestry Shows Britain’s Birth as a European Nation,” *The Guardian*, 17 January 2018. Another visual parody, the *Bye-EU Tapestry*, indicates that the eleventh-century embroidery became an unavoidable target (including for bad puns) in the age of Brexit; see Oliver Harvey, “The Sun’s Brexit-Inspired Tapestry Shows EU Membership was One Long Stitch-Up,” *The Sun*, 18 January 2018, <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/5366747/brexit-inspired-bayeux-tapestry/>.

## Always the Same Politics?

Attempts to bend the prenational Middle Ages to fit modern beliefs about nationhood have been convincingly exposed by medieval historians. But there is still no insurance against popular (or even scholarly) misconceptions, and medieval culture has again of late become attractive fodder for historical projections. Such programmatic uses of the Middle Ages, both current and past, have predominantly come from the conservative, right-wing, imperial, and (neo)fascist end of the political spectrum.<sup>42</sup> As the name implies, progressive ideas generally do not find the past a useful political reference. Nor did it help the utility of the Middle Ages to the left that it featured an all-powerful church often closely allied with dynastic states. It is thus of little surprise that most available scholarship and virtually all contributions to *Medieval Art, Modern Politics* attend to conservative appropriations of the Middle Ages. But this should not obscure the existence of an important left-leaning, sometimes radical strand that also revisited the medieval artistic legacy. For most reactionary right-wing appropriations of medieval sites and objects—depending on the period, in nationalist, Catholic, fascist, free-market, or Confederate and proslavery variants—there was an equivalent on the left.<sup>43</sup>

Progressive and even overtly subversive currents can be detected in approaches to the medieval artistic past from at least the eighteenth century. When Gothic sham ruins were erected in the picturesque gardens of English estates to add historic depth, it was not an exercise in nostalgic admiration for a mutilated past, but a Whiggish declaration *against* the Catholic, feudal age, which was telescoped with the recent—and corrupt—Jacobite era. A past, in sum, that deserved to be crumbling.<sup>44</sup> Even Horace Walpole (1717–97), in many ways the figurehead of the Gothic Revival movement, drew a clear distinction between the reactivation of medieval art and the unacceptable religious and political implications that era had for someone of progressive convictions. His creative understanding of the Middle Ages yielded the innovative Gothic novel *The Castle of Otranto* and the equally seminal mansion, Strawberry Hill, outside London. There, Walpole put together a seductive collage of actual medieval furniture and decor with medievalizing elements to construct partly invented genealogies that he projected both backward and forward toward a queer utopian future.<sup>45</sup> Even more than Walpole, the influential art critic John Ruskin (1819–1900) would a few decades

<sup>42</sup> Di Carpegna Falconieri, *Militant Middle Ages*, 173–93, with full bibliography.

<sup>43</sup> For a case study on this kind of ideological fungibility, see Brigitte Buettner, “The Columns ‘From the Tomb of Charlemagne’ between Aachen and the Louvre: A Modern Spoliation Saga,” *Gesta* 63, no. 2 (2024): 169–203.

<sup>44</sup> David Stewart, “Political Ruins: Gothic Sham Ruins and the ‘45,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 55 (1996): 400–411.

<sup>45</sup> On Walpole’s medievalism and his (sexual) politics, see Matthew Reeve, *Gothic Architecture and Sexuality in the Circle of Horace Walpole* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2020).

later idealize the artistic legacy of the Middle Ages, specifically the medieval guild system founded on what he saw as a fundamentally nonauthoritarian and collaborative model of labor. It was his intention to revitalize standards of excellence in the industrial age by contrasting the medieval collectivist model to the capitalist system in which alienated workers tethered to assembly lines churn out soulless commodities. William Morris (1834–96), who became an outspoken socialist in his late years, subscribed to the same view, pushing it to explicitly Marxist and mutualist political ends. In his many writings, his tireless activism and public speeches, and (to some extent) the way he operated his textile workshop, Morris championed collaborative modes of production that encouraged individuals to consider themselves part of a team that had a stake in the quality of, and a degree of control over, the final products.<sup>46</sup>

In France in the same period, one thinks of staunch anticlerical voices such as Victor Hugo (1802–85) and especially Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc (1814–79), indefatigable restorer of medieval monuments, designer of neo-Gothic decorative arts, architectural theorist, and influential early advocate for historic preservation (as his mention in multiple contributions in this volume attests).<sup>47</sup> He mythologized the Gothic as an urban, communal, and progressive “revolution” that put an end to the monastic, regressive, and even repressive Romanesque era: a foreshadowing of the revolutions of his own time.<sup>48</sup> More radical was Maximilien Luce (1858–1941), one of several artists whose political sympathies drew him to the ideas of the dominant anarchist intellectual of the time, Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921). Similar to Ruskin, this painter understood the cathedral to be the product of the medieval guild and therefore an unsurpassed expression of mutualism and cooperative labor practices. Accordingly, Luce’s *Notre-Dame of Paris* series (Fig. 1.7) embeds the majestic Gothic building much more tightly into the urban fabric and people’s everyday activities than one of his most immediate models, Monet’s quasi-abstract paintings of Rouen cathedral.<sup>49</sup>

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46 For the views of Ruskin and Morris on the Middle Ages, see Frances S. Connelly, “John Ruskin and the Savage Gothic,” *Journal of Art Historiography* 12 (June 2015), <https://doi.org/article/0ee6b5b6f301417697baed36ec8e093a>; Elisabeth Brewer, “John Ruskin’s Medievalism,” in *From Araby to Engeland: Medieval Studies in Honour of Mahmoud Manzalaoui*, ed. A. E. Christa Canitz and Gernot R. Wieland (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1999), 265–82, at 275–80; Joanna Banham and Jennifer Harris, eds., *William Morris and the Middle Ages* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984); Jan Marsh, “William Morris and Medievalism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Medievalism*, ed. Joanne Parker and Corinna Wagner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 507–22.

47 The literature on Viollet-le-Duc is extensive. For studies germane to our topic, see Kevin Murphy, *Memory and Modernity: Viollet-le-Duc at Vézelay* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000) and Martin Bressani, *Architecture and the Historical Imagination: Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

48 On the reception of the Romanesque, see Tina Waldeier Bizzarro, *Romanesque Architectural Criticism: A Prehistory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

49 Maylis Curie, “The Anarchist Cathedral,” in *The Idea of the Gothic Cathedral: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Meanings of the Medieval Edifice in Modern Times*, ed. Stephanie E. Glaser (Turnhout:



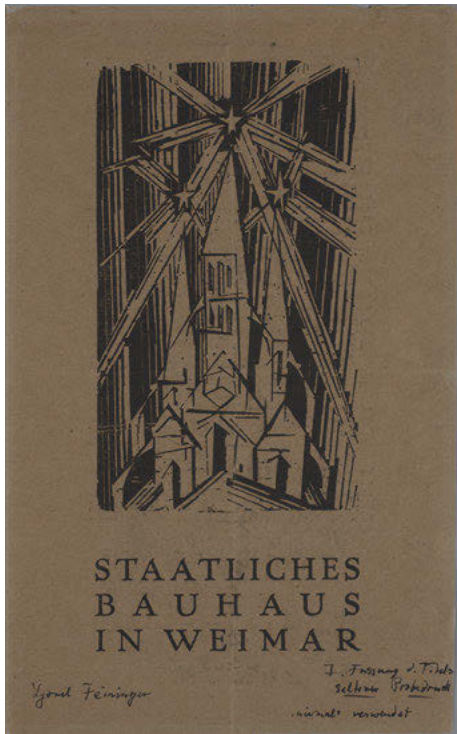
**Fig. 1.7:** Maximilien Luce, *The Quai Saint-Michel and Notre-Dame*, 1901, Paris, Musée d'Orsay. Photo: Alamy Stock Photo.

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Brepols, 2018), 149–70; Robyn Roslak, *Neo-Impressionism and Anarchism in Fin-de-Siècle France: Painting, Politics, and Landscape* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

The view of the Gothic era as a utopia of social harmony and individual freedom continued to inspire artists into the twentieth century. This was especially true of those associated with the Bauhaus, the innovative art school established in post–World War I Germany dedicated to integrating all the arts and breaking the barriers between high art and the crafts, between artisanal and industrial production. Lyonel Feininger's image of a Gothic cathedral on the cover of the first Bauhaus manifesto of 1919 may seem to our eyes a strange choice to herald an avant-garde artistic movement, but it was the product of a well-established modernist and progressive identification with medieval creativity and artistic excellence (Fig. 1.8).<sup>50</sup>

Such leftist reevaluations of the most prestigious of all forms of medieval architecture did not go unchallenged. With the modern emergence of nation-states and the concomitant flourishing of nationalist ideologies, the Gothic cathedral also came to be cast as an expression of an inherent national character, specifically French and German.



**Fig. 1.8:** Lyonel Feininger, Preliminary design of the cover for the Program of the State Bauhaus in Weimar, 1919, Harvard Art Museums/Busch-Reisinger Museum, Gift of Julia Feininger, © Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn. Photo: © President and Fellows of Harvard College, BR49.198.

<sup>50</sup> Alexander Nagel, *Medieval/Modern: Art out of Time* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2012), 241–62; Ross Anderson, “The Medieval Masons’ Lodge as Paradigm in Peter Behrens’s *Dombauhütte* in Munich, 1922,” *Art Bulletin* 90 (2008): 441–65.



The vexed question of the invention of the Gothic architectural language has been one of the most politicized fields of scholarly inquiry since 1772 when Goethe published an ecstatic account of the cathedral of Strasbourg and its architect, Erwin von Steinbach, pulling both firmly into the German cultural orbit.<sup>51</sup> Academic wrangling continued throughout the nineteenth century, reaching a feverish pitch during and after the Franco-Prussian War (1870–71). Strasbourg's shifting location, sometimes in France, sometimes in Germany, made it a natural focus of ideological struggle. Nationalistically driven debates continued with undiminished acrimony into the twentieth century, hardened by the First and Second World Wars. The distinguished art historian Pierre Francastel (also noted in Salto Santamaría's essay) denounced the partisan annexation of the origins of the Gothic by German scholars as the prelude to military conquest.<sup>52</sup> For Francastel, this was not just a question of ideology; he joined the faculty of Strasbourg's university in 1936 after having taught in Warsaw and, a few years later, was extremely active in the French Resistance to the Nazi occupation.<sup>53</sup> His criticism of Germany and German art history revisited an attack written during the previous World War by another French art historian, Émile Mâle. The title of Mâle's 1917 book *L'art allemand et l'art français du Moyen Âge* (German and French art of the Middle Ages) could hardly be more innocuous, but the first sentence set a consistent tone for the hundreds of pages that follow: "Even to speak of German art requires a huge effort."<sup>54</sup>

Gothic cathedrals were the site of academic fighting; with hugely more murderous consequences, they turned into actual battlefields. The cathedral of Reims, for example, suffered heavily from bombardments during the First World War. Yet even assessing the extent of the damage, let alone the causes, became a bone of contention, as French and German reports vehemently disagreed during a sustained propaganda

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51 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, "On German Architecture," trans. John Gage in *German Essays on Art History*, ed. Gert Schiff (New York: Continuum, 1988), 33–40. Paul Frankl, *The Gothic: Literary Sources and Interpretations through Eight Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960) remains an invaluable survey of changing views of the Gothic.

52 Pierre Francastel, *L'histoire de l'art, instrument de la propagande allemande* (Paris: Librairie de Médecis, 1945), 32.

53 For other attempts to correlate scholars' politics (ranging from Marxist to Nazi) with their interpretations of medieval art, see Michael Camille, "'How New York Stole the Idea of Romanesque Art': Medieval, Modern and Postmodern in Meyer Schapiro," *Oxford Art Journal* 17 (1994), 65–75; Eliza Garrison, "Ottonian Art and Its Afterlife: Revisiting Percy Ernst Schramm's Portraiture Idea," *Oxford Art Journal* 32 (2009): 207–22; Anja Schürmann, "'Rechte' und 'linke' Ideologisierung: Wilhelm Pinder und Richard Hamann beschreiben staufische Kunst," in *Kunstgeschichte im "Dritten Reich"*, ed. Ruth Heftrig, Olaf Peters, and Barbara Schellwald (Berlin, 2008), 245–59; and Otto Karl Werckmeister, review of Meyer Schapiro, *Romanesque Art*, *Art Quarterly* ns 2 (1979), 211–18.

54 Émile Mâle, *L'art allemand et l'art français du Moyen Âge*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Paris: Armand Colin, 1923), 5. On the German reaction to Mâle's publication, see Evonne Levy, "The German Art Historians of World War I: Grautoff, Wichert, Weisbach and Brinckmann and the Activities of the Zentralstelle für Auslandsdienst," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 74 (2011), 373–400.



war waged by the two sides.<sup>55</sup> As soon as the shelling subsided and German vandalism had been internationally decried, the “martyred cathedral” became in the United States an emblem of the injured French nation and, more unexpectedly, a site of American cultural identification: the restoration of the French Gothic cathedral was adopted as an American cause.<sup>56</sup> This was an important shift; heritage sites could be unmoored from national identifications to become international cultural patrimony.<sup>57</sup> A comparable logic operated after the 2019 fire at Notre-Dame in Paris since (as Murphy’s essay shows) the cathedral now combines its nineteenth-century function as a national site of unity with its global status as a monument of world heritage. This is not to imply that national narratives disappeared. Notably in Britain, cathedrals continue to commemorate the Great War through chivalry-themed tombs and modern stained-glass windows with crusading iconographies that were installed in the 1920s and ’30s.<sup>58</sup>

## Politics of Rebuilding, Politics of Dissemination

The twelve essays in *Medieval Art, Modern Politics* were produced in response to an open call for papers. Although that call was broad and specified no organizational agenda, the accepted essays fell into two groups, one centered on architectural restoration and rebuilding, the other on the display and propagation of works in other media. Most take the form of case studies, an ideal format for showing at a granular level how medieval art and architecture were interpreted, disseminated, and, in the case of buildings, altered across time and space. The chronological breadth of *Medieval Art, Modern Politics* is deliberately large, running from the Counter-Reformation to the twenty-first century. We believe that an approach based on such a *longue durée* is essential to fully understand the hows and the whys of contemporary right-wing extremism’s love affair with a European Middle Ages viewed as white, patriarchal, ethnically pure, and culturally homogeneous.<sup>59</sup> This volume mirrors the postmedieval

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55 Thomas W. Gaehtgens, *Reims on Fire: War and Reconciliation between France and Germany*, trans. David Dollenmayer (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2008).

56 Nicola Lambourn, “Production versus Destruction: Art, World War I, and Art History,” *Art History* 22 (1999): 347–63; Elizabeth Emery, “The Martyred Cathedral: American Attitudes toward Notre-Dame de Reims during the First World War,” in Marquardt and Jordan, *Medieval Art*, 312–39.

57 This transformation has been analyzed for Cologne Cathedral by Astrid Swenson: “Cologne Cathedral as an International Monument,” in *Rewriting German History: New Perspectives on Modern Germany*, ed. Jan Rüger and Nikolaus Wachsmann (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 29–51.

58 Stefan Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory: War, Remembrance and Medievalism in Britain and Germany, 1914–1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

59 The emphasis on historical context separates this volume from two recent art-historical studies of the relationship between medieval art and the modern world: Nagel’s *Medieval/Modern* and Amy Knight

reception of medieval art and hence is transnational as well as trans-chronological. Scholars based in eight countries are represented in this volume and their subjects range to include Belgium, Cyprus, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Russia, Spain, Switzerland, and the United States. What we aim to surface is how this long and broad history cannot, and should not, be divorced from an awareness of how it has been exploited to serve modern political agendas.

The public prominence of the built environment makes it an especially attractive locus for acts of political communication with a high symbolic impact. Because the re-shaping and reprogramming of architecture is not merely an act of interpretation, but one that physically alters the material remnants of the past, it is particularly striking and drastic. Half of the essays in *Medieval Art, Modern Politics* address this topic, showing how the restoration and rebuilding of architectural sites supported, more or less explicitly, goals of the present. Given the central role of nation building in the modern era, it is unsurprising that nationalism figures large in every essay in this section. From Spain (Lamprakos, Moreno Martín), Germany (Carqué), and France (Murphy) to Poland (van der Meulen) and Russia (Foletti), the medieval built heritage is examined in its intersection with modern interventions often weighted by nationalistic objectives. Whether the essays are focused chronologically on one period (Francoist Spain, post-Second World War Poland) or look at a set of related buildings over time (Germany from the Kingdom of Prussia to the Nazi era; from czarist to Putin's Russia), all reveal how medieval buildings—intact, ruined, or vanished—were manipulated both physically and discursively to provide historic depth and legitimize modern politics. As the examples of the mosque-cathedral in Córdoba, churches and cathedrals in Poland and Russia, and castles in Germany and Spain make clear, these re-configurations concerned both religious and secular structures. Common to all discussions is the explicit ideological dimension inherent in such cultural-stylistic choices, specifically in terms of religious and ethnic identities as well as national ones: Catholicism in Poland and in Spain (where it functioned in opposition to those countries' Protestant and Islamic pasts); the Russian version of a neo-Byzantine (and, under Putin, neo-neo-Byzantine) visual language exported to satellite states from the Balkans to Georgia and Armenia; German castles along the Rhine as an anti-French declaration.

Medieval architecture also played an important role in the emergent heritage tourism that is another characteristic of modernity. Gothic cathedrals became a centerpiece of the guidebooks to the battlefields of the First World War produced by the Michelin tire company in the war's immediate wake and published in English-language editions intended for Americans and Britons on driving tours of France.<sup>60</sup> The Italian fascist re-

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Powell's *Depositions: Scenes from the Late Medieval Church and the Modern Museum* (New York: Zone Books, 2012).

<sup>60</sup> Stephen L. Harp, *Marketing Michelin: Advertising & Cultural Identity in Twentieth-Century France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 89–125.

gime similarly promoted national and international tourism via invented traditions such as pseudomedieval civic spectacles and public monuments.<sup>61</sup> Tourism and its impact on the modern understanding of medieval art figure in several essays in this volume that consider subjects including the unabated appeal of Notre-Dame of Paris (Murphy) or the Roman sites and monuments associated with the foundations of Christianity (Cecalupo), the sense of historic continuity projected onto the physical remains of medieval castles (Carqué, Moreno Martín), and the exoticism of Al-Andalus (Lamprakos) and the eastern Mediterranean (Mavromatidis and Villano).<sup>62</sup>

The second group of essays in *Medieval Art, Modern Politics* queries the ways in which medieval images and objects lent themselves to politicized interpretations (and manipulations) when displayed and disseminated in the modern world. Publications and exhibitions have played a crucial role in mediating the medieval legacy, even if, unlike restoration and rebuilding, they do not physically alter its material substance. Scholarly writings, popular media, facsimile reproductions, and temporary and permanent museum displays are some of the arenas addressed in this section. Inseparable from this knowledge production at both the erudite and popular level are technological and institutional developments. Although the role of printing in bringing medieval art to modern audiences has been less studied than the equivalent function of exhibitions and museum displays, multiple contributions to our volume tackle its role in shaping modern understandings of medieval art. Cecalupo shows that printing enterprises controlled by the papacy were key to making early Christian catacomb art accessible to the broader public. Mavromatidis and Villano discuss how a range of antiquarian publications and scholarly histories used the contested funerary heritage of medieval Cyprus for competing political purposes. Danielson's discussion focuses on two "middlebrow" genres—textbooks and advertising—and examines how these new forms of dissemination shaped twentieth-century Americans' view of the art and history of the Middle Ages in a country far removed from Europe and its storehouse of medieval art and architecture.

Much like active approaches to the medieval architectural patrimony—which buildings do we preserve and in what style?—political formations and cultural institutions have had a considerable impact on how, in the course of the nineteenth century, medieval art, having acquired a larger public presence, was interpreted. The creation of the museum around 1800 was a paradigm-changing outgrowth of the mod-

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61 D. Medina Lasansky, *The Renaissance Perfected: Architecture, Spectacle, and Tourism in Fascist Italy* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004).

62 Disneyland and the Disney universe, with their recurrent medievalizing imagery, are a meta-incarnation of this development. See Tison Pugh and Susan Aronstein, eds., *The Disney Middle Ages: A Fairy-Tale and Fantasy Past* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012) and Wolf Burchard, *Inspiring Walt Disney: The Animation of French Decorative Arts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021), 65–101. Despite the subtitle, the latter includes material on how Uta of Naumburg was the source for the representation of the evil queen in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937).

ern concern for citizen education, and studies of the way in which medieval art was exhibited in these new institutional spaces have become an active area of recent scholarship.<sup>63</sup> One of the first museums to open to the public was the Musée des Monuments Français created by Alexandre Lenoir (1761–1839). He made it his life's work to salvage as many works as he could from the Revolutionary vandalism that had hacked through his country's artistic landscape during the preceding years. Half of Lenoir's collection consisted of medieval sculpture, which he arranged in a secularized Parisian convent in an innovative display that introduced the concept of period rooms.<sup>64</sup> This was an early expression of the same compulsion to preserve that Faiers examines through a consideration of how contested local, regional, and national interests affected the display of a late medieval sculptural group. Similar tensions between different institutional jurisdictions were at play in the conception and design of the Swiss national museum. Here, as Sears discusses, the Middle Ages were enlisted to perform Swiss identity. Supporting nation-building efforts was not the only function of the display of medieval art in museums. Salto Santamaría examines a series of transnational exhibitions of Mosan art mounted across Europe in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, stressing how they allowed politicians, museum officials, and visitors to come to terms with that region's turbulent recent history. This contribution, like every essay in this volume, reaffirms a core tenet that unifies *Medieval Art, Modern Politics*: when past and present meet, art history, knowledge, and power unavoidably intersect.

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<sup>63</sup> Two notable collective volumes are Enrico Castelnuovo and Alessio Monciatti, eds., *Medioevo/Medievali: Un secolo di esposizioni d'arte medievale* (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2008) and Wolfgang Brückle, Pierre Alain Mariaux, and Daniela Mondini, eds., *Musealisierung mittelalterlicher Kunst: Ansätze, Ansätze, Ansprüche* (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2015).

<sup>64</sup> Alexandra Stara, *The Museum of French Monuments 1795–1816: "Killing Art to Make History"* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2013); Geneviève Bresc-Bautier et al., eds., *Un musée révolutionnaire: Le musée des monuments français d'Alexandre Lenoir* (Paris: Hazan, 2016).

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## **II The Politics of Building and Rebuilding**



Ivan Foletti

# Russian Imperialism and Byzantium (1801–2023): Architecture, Visual Culture, and Scholarship



**Fig. 2.1:** Moscow Oblast, Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ, 2020. Photo: Sergey Sebelev/Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 4.0 International).

In June 2020, the Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ, the main church serving the armed forces of the Russian Federation, was consecrated near Moscow in the Patriot Park Kubinka (Fig. 2.1). The building had been completed on 9 May of that year, sealing in a tangible way the celebrations of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany. The structure's ambitions, however, were even greater, as it was meant to stand as a tribute to the "heroic deeds of the Russian people in all wars."<sup>1</sup> During the construction of this monumental, ninety-five-meter-high building, information was leaked to the media about the mosaic-strewn interior, which was to depict Joseph Stalin as the victor of World War II and Vladimir Putin as the conqueror of

<sup>1</sup> Andrey Arkad'ev, "Glavnyy khram Vooruzhennykh sil RF poluchil status Patriarshego sobora RPTS" [The main Temple of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation received the status of the patriarchal cathedral of the Russian Orthodox church], *Telekanal Zvezda*, 2 June 2020, <https://tvzvezda.ru/news/2020261536-sD2Jb.html>.

Crimea in 2014. In the end, Putin's likeness was removed; according to the official version presented by the Russian media, this was done at his own request.<sup>2</sup>

The debate over the representation of the leaders of both the USSR and the Russian Federation has obscured what is, in my view, a much more significant aspect of this project, namely the visual language that was chosen for it. From the exterior, the cathedral reads like a synthesis of two key buildings of nineteenth-century Russia: Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior, built as a celebratory monument to commemorate the victory over Napoleon (Fig. 2.2),<sup>3</sup> and St. Petersburg's Church of the Resurrection of Christ the Savior on the Blood, built around 1900 on the site where Czar



**Fig. 2.2:** Moscow, Cathedral of Christ the Savior, 1839–83; photograph ca. 1890–1900. Photo: Library of Congress.

<sup>2</sup> “V RPC ob’yasnili situatsiyu s mozaikoy s Putinyim v khrame Vooruzhennykh sil” [The Russian Orthodox church explained the situation with the mosaic of Putin in the Church of the Armed Forces], *Ria Novosti*, 1 May 2020, <https://ria.ru/20200501/1570856062.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Evgenia Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior: Its Creation, Destruction, and Rebirth 1813–1997* (Moscow: Smashwords Edition, 2012); Karolina Foletti, “The Cathedral of Christ the Savior and Russia’s Self-Perception” (master’s thesis, University of Vienna, 2016).





**Fig. 2.3:** Saint Petersburg, Church of the Resurrection of Christ the Savior on the Blood, 1883–1907; photograph by Sergei Prokudin-Gorskii, ca. 1905–15. Photo: Library of Congress.

Alexander II was assassinated in 1881 (Fig. 2.3).<sup>4</sup> Yet even more interesting than the overall architectural models for the church of the armed forces was the choice of glass mosaic to decorate it. That medium played a key role in the nineteenth-century buildings that served as its direct inspiration, but the technique is inevitably associated with the art of late antiquity and the monuments of the eastern Roman Empire (“Byzantium”), where its use persisted until the fourteenth century.

On a visual and conceptual level, Putin’s Russia was drawing explicitly on nineteenth-century czarist representations; implicitly, though no less emphatically, it was referring to the traditions of the “medieval” world. The cathedral’s visual appearance directly invites reflection on the relationship between artistic representations produced by the imperialism of the Russian Federation, the USSR, and czarist Russia, thus opening up the question of the role of history (and art history) in the quest for

<sup>4</sup> Aleksandr Bertash, “Voskreseniya Khristova Sobor,” in *Pravoslavnaya Enciklopediya* (Moscow: Tserkovno-nauchnyy tsentr “Pravoslavnaya enciklopediya,” 2005), 441–45; Georgy Butik, *The Church of the Saviour on the Blood* (St. Petersburg: St Isaac’s Cathedral Museum, 1996).

power of particular regimes or political parties. The primary aim of this essay is to reflect on the nature and meaning of the Byzantine and Russian medieval visual legacies in czarist imperialism in the nineteenth century. It then discusses the Soviet Union's use of similar visual strategies (in a completely opposite ideological vein) before turning to the (mis)appropriation of the past in contemporary Russia. Throughout, Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior, a building most emblematic of Russian imperialism, will serve as a unifying point. Built, destroyed, and rebuilt over the last two centuries, this monument is a true barometer of the use (and abuse) of the past by Russian and Soviet regimes.

## Napoleon, the Russian Empire, and Byzantium in Culture and Architecture

Russian imperialism can be traced back to 1547 when Ivan IV, “the Terrible,” (d. 1584) acquired the title “Czar of all Russia.”<sup>5</sup> The drive for expansion would become ever more present in Russian political strategies from that point onward and did not differ much from the efforts of other European powers. Every imperial power needs rhetorical weaponry to defend its ambitions; in Russia in the early nineteenth century, this manifested itself in an increasingly explicit claim of a special relationship with the “Byzantine empire.”<sup>6</sup> Byzantium, the most powerful medieval Christian empire, was presented in Russian history as a guarantor of imperial legitimacy. Ivan, for example, received his title from the patriarch of Constantinople, while two centuries later the power rhetoric of Catherine II (“the Great,” Romanov; r. 1762–96) referred directly to the empire on the Bosphorus.<sup>7</sup> What was known as Catherine’s “Greek dream” was based on a desire to take Constantinople from the hands of the Ottomans.<sup>8</sup> Utopian as it was, this political fantasy yielded a concrete visual echo in a 1779 medal designed by Carl Leberecht and Johann Balthasar Gass for the birth of Grand Prince Constantine Pavlovich (Fig. 2.4). On the reverse, one sees the silhouette of Constantinople’s Hagia Sophia, the greatest church of eastern Christianity, next to the three theological virtues: Hope, Faith, and Love. There are crosses on top of the church’s dome and the

5 Isabel de Madariaga, *Ivan the Terrible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 75–91.

6 Pavel Rakitin, “Byzantine Echoes in the Nineteenth Century Press and in the Writings of Russian Intellectuals,” in *Byzantium, Russia and Europe*, ed. Ivan Foletti and Zuzana Frantová (Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2013), 98–109.

7 Hélène Carrère d’Encausse, “Le rêve grec de Catherine II,” in *La Méditerranée d’une rive à l’autre: Culture classique et cultures périphériques. Actes du 17ème colloque de la Villa Kérylos à Beaulieu-sur-Mer les 20 & 21 octobre 2006*, ed. André Laronde and Jean Leclant (Paris: Publications de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 2007), 1–8.

8 Michel Heller, *Histoire de la Russie et de son empire* (Paris: Plon, 1997), 582–83.

two flanking minarets.<sup>9</sup> This aggressive erasure of the building's Islamic identity (Constantinople was captured in 1453 by the Ottomans to become Istanbul) was an explicit manifestation of the adoption of Byzantium as the Christian polity that best expressed the current Russian imperial ambitions.<sup>10</sup>



**Fig. 2.4:** Carl Leberecht and Johann Balthasar Gass, Medal for the birth of Grand Duke Konstantin Pavlovich, 1779. Photo: Fritz Rudolf Künker GmbH & Co. KG, Osnabrück; Lübke & Wiedemann KG, Leonberg. Used with permission.

If the myth of Byzantium as the origin and guarantor of Russian power was alive and present in imperial rhetoric until the eighteenth century, the Russian aristocracy increasingly started to look toward Western models of power and cultural expressions.<sup>11</sup> After the fall of Napoleon in 1815, a newly found sense of independent sovereignty sharpened the debates as to whether Russia should be oriented toward the West or the East.<sup>12</sup> For some intellectuals—such as Pyotr Chadaev, who in 1836 published the influential and critical *Philosophical Letters*—the idea of Byzantium as the origin of Russian culture was to be rejected; for others, Byzantium registered retroactively as a promised land upon which Russian identity could and should be built.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The obverse of the medal features Empress Catherine II herself.

<sup>10</sup> Véronique Schiltz, “Catherine II, les Turcs et l’antique,” *Comptes rendus des séances de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 154 (2010): 233–75.

<sup>11</sup> Georges Florovsky, *Les voies de la théologie russe* (Lausanne: L’Âge de l’Homme, 2001 [originally published 1937]), 249–54; Alexei Peskov, “La naissance du discours philosophique russe et l’esprit d’émulation (années 1820–1840),” *Romantisme* 92 (1996): 67–78.

<sup>12</sup> Heller, *Histoire de la Russie*, 661; Dominic Lieven, *Russia Against Napoleon: The Battle for Europe, 1807 to 1814* (London: Penguin, 2009).

<sup>13</sup> Heller, *Histoire de la Russie*, 712–15; Robin Aizlewood, “Revisiting Russian Identity in Russian Thought, from Chaadaev to the Early Twentieth Century,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 78

With the accession of Czar Nicholas I in 1825, disillusionment with the previously idealized West, exacerbated by Napoleon's invasion of 1812, was quickly reflected in the visual self-(re)presentation of the empire. After years during which official Russian architecture imitated western seventeenth- and eighteenth-century models, the czar's entourage started to consider how the Russian Empire could be presented in a new light. The Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow offers a case of this turnaround. Meant to celebrate Russia's victory over Napoleon, the projected building was designed in 1817 by Alexander Vitberg in a neoclassical style.<sup>14</sup> Specifically—and paradoxically—its appearance was reminiscent of Soufflot's Panthéon in Paris (1755–90). But for the czar, a form predicated so explicitly on a French template became politically unacceptable. He therefore commissioned Konstantin Ton (1794–1881) to generate a new design for a building that was to be at once truly Russian and truly Byzantine. The construction stretched into the 1860s, yielding a church that (according to the architect) related as much to Hagia Sophia as to Russia's medieval architectural heritage.<sup>15</sup> Yet a close look shows explicit references only to Russian medieval (and Renaissance) monuments, such as Moscow's Dormition Cathedral. The elision—in theory neo-Byzantine (imitating models from the empire of Constantinople) but in practice neo-Russian (inspired by local medieval production)—is not surprising; it shows how much, in the contemporary mindset, the notions “medieval Russian” and “Byzantine” overlapped. This visual style, which from the 1830s on became by czarist decree Russia's official national style, was thus intended to refer to the historic roots of the Russian Empire—at once imperial, Russian medieval, and Byzantine—and to legitimize Russia's modern expansionist ambitions.<sup>16</sup> Nicholas I did not limit himself to defining a new official architectural style. Following Sergey Uvarov (1786–1855), a Russian aristocrat and national minister of education, the czar endorsed the notion that the new Russian state should stand on three pillars: Orthodoxy, autocracy, and nation.<sup>17</sup> The Orthodox (Byzantine) tradition therefore became one of the foundations of state identity; even more, and in a way that had

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(2000): 20–43; Georges Nivat, “Nationalité et nationalisme russes,” in *La question russe: Essais sur le nationalisme russe*, ed. Michel Niqueux (Paris: Éditions Universitaires, 1992), 5–14; and François Rouleau, “Le nationalisme slavophile,” in *ibid.*, 41–48.

14 Kirichenko, *Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior*, 52; Karolina Foletti, “Cathedral of Christ the Savior,” 17–20.

15 Konstantin Ton, *Proekty tserkvey, sochinennye arkhitektorom ego imp. Velichestva, professorom arkhitektury Imperatorskoy Akademii khudozhestv i chlenom raznykh inostrannykh akademiy Konstantinom Tonom* [The designs of churches composed by His Imperial Majesty's architect, professor of the Academy of Arts, and member of various foreign academies, Konstantin Ton] (St. Petersburg: publisher unknown, 1844), 1.

16 “St. 218 Ustava Stroitel'nogo” [Art. 218 of the Building statute], in *Svod zakonov Rossijskoj Imperii. Ustavy putej soobščeniya, počtovyj, telegrafičeskij, stroitel'nyj, i požarnyj* (St. Petersburg: Tipografija Vtorogo Otdelenija Sobstvennoj E.I.V. Kancelarii, 1857), 12:415.

17 Heller, *Histoire de la Russie*, 718–21.

a fundamental impact on the following decades, it became a justification for the political and territorial expansion of the empire.

The Russian empire had already used a similar strategy in 1801 when it annexed Georgia. Russian propaganda presented the incorporation of this ancient Caucasian territory with its distinct culture as the logical consequence of a common Orthodox identity.<sup>18</sup> Throughout the nineteenth century, Orthodoxy and its proclaimed continuity with the Byzantine empire became a recurring argument used to defend the czar's imperial, and often aggressively expansionist, policies. The supposedly common Byzantine past was deployed to justify the gradual annexation of the Caucasus and then the military interventions in the Balkans where the Russian Empire was (officially) protecting the "Orthodox brothers" against the "Ottoman infidels."<sup>19</sup> Wars with the Ottoman Empire were further grounded in the desire to conquer Constantinople/Istanbul and reclaim it for the Orthodox world. Alexander II (r. 1855–81) declared that he wished to sit on the imperial throne of Czargrad, the Russian name for Constantinople that means "City of the Czars." His attempt to translate the Russian czarist dream into reality during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78 was stopped only by western powers led by France and Great Britain. Still later, Nicholas II (r. 1896–1917) entered World War I with a similar hegemonic project aimed at annexing Constantinople.<sup>20</sup>

The use of Byzantine identity in Russian imperial rhetoric did not just serve political ends. Scholarly arguments supported the Byzantine-Russian imperial and cultural "filiation" from the mid-nineteenth century onward.<sup>21</sup> The first scholars dealing with medieval art—both erudite amateurs and scholars—increasingly used visual evidence to argue for an indisputable continuity between the eastern Roman Empire and that of the Romanovs. Ivan Sakharov (1807–63) and Dimitry Rovinsky (1824–95), for example, promoted the view that the entire history of Russian painting descended from Byzantine art. According to them, forty ancient icons believed to be Byzantine, the oldest images preserved in Russia, were clear proof of this filiation.<sup>22</sup> While their ar-

18 "Manifest k gruzinskomu narodu. 12(24) sentyabrya 1801 goda" [Manifest to the Georgian people, 12 (24) September 1801], in *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiyskoy imperii s 1649 goda: 1800–1801* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiya 2 Otdeleniya Sobstv. e. i. v. Kancelyarii, 1830) 26:782–87.

19 Ivan Foletti and Pavel Rakitin, "From Russia with Love: The First Russian Studies on the Art of the Southern Caucasus," *Venezia Arti* 27 (December 2018): 15–33.

20 Heller, *Histoire de la Russie*, 928–29.

21 Maria Lidova, "The Rise of Byzantine Art and Archaeology in Late Imperial Russia," in *Empires of Faith in Late Antiquity*, ed. Jaś Elsner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 128–60.

22 Ivan Sakharov, *Issledovanie o russkom ikonopisanii* [Studies dedicated to Russian icon-painting], 2 vols. (St. Petersburg: Tipografiya Yakova Treya, 1841–49); "Sakharov, Ivan Petrovich," in *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, ed. A.M. Prokhorov (New York: Macmillan Publishers, 1979), 23:233; Dmitry Rovinsky, *Istoriya russkikh shkol ikonopisaniya do kontsa XVII veka* [The history of the Russian schools of icon-painting, up to the end of the seventeenth century] (St. Petersburg: Tipografiya 2 Otdeleniya Sobstv. e. i. v. Kancelyarii, 1856); Hermann Goltz, *Alles von Zarin und Teufel: Europäische Russlandbilder. Die gesamten Rovinskij-Materialien für eine Russische Ikonographie* (Cologne: DuMont, 2006).

guments showed that scholars ignored what the authentic medieval production of the eastern Roman Empire looked like—the icons were covered by layers of restorations and darkened by the smoke of candles—their hypotheses nevertheless provided the basis for asserting the continuity between the two empires. In a similar vein, Grigory Gagarin (1810–93), a friend of the writer Pushkin who was a military officer and administrator but had been trained as a painter and architect, wrote an early history of architecture and decoration that united, through an audacious evolutionary line, late antique Ravenna with nineteenth-century Moscow.<sup>23</sup>

Some decades later, early professional art historians offered parallel lines of reasoning. Nikodim Kondakov (1844–1925), the founder of modern art history in Russia, provided apparently robust scholarly arguments for the newly expansionist Russian political views.<sup>24</sup> In his studies on the art of the Middle Ages in the southern Caucasus, he contended that the region had always been a province of the Byzantine empire.<sup>25</sup> Such a claim is incorrect, especially with regard to architectural history, but it would strongly resonate in the very years when Russia was trying to unite the cultures of Georgia and Armenia into a single entity under its control.<sup>26</sup> Kondakov's attention to Macedonia had even more pointed political ramifications. With historical, artistic, and folkloric arguments, he argued that the country should simply be annexed to Bulgaria, an ally of the Romanovs' empire.<sup>27</sup> While it is difficult to determine whether such research was intentionally conditioned by politics or not, the scholarly arguments certainly supported Russia's hegemonic political goals in the region.<sup>28</sup>

23 Grigory Gagarin, *Kratkaya khronologicheskaya tablitsa v posobie istorii vizantiyskogo iskusstva* [Brief chronological table in the handbook of Byzantine art history] (Tbilisi: Tipografiya Kanceljarii namestnika kavkaza, 1856); id., *Sbornik vizantiyskikh i drevnerusskikh ornamentov, sobrannykh i risovannykh knyazem Gr. Gr. Gagarinym* [Collection of Byzantine and Old Russian ornaments, collected and painted by Prince Gr. Gagarin] (St. Petersburg: Izhdiveniem S.-Peterb. centr. uchilishha tehn. risovaniya bar. Shtiglica, 1887); I. Foletti and Rakitin, "From Russia with Love," 46–50.

24 Irina Kyzlasova, *Istoriya izucheniya vizantiyskogo i drevnerusskogo iskusstva v Rossii*. F. I. Buslayev, N. P. Kondakova: metody, idei, teorii [The history of the study of Byzantine and ancient Russian art in Russia. F. I. Buslayev, N. P. Kondakov: Methods, ideas, theories] (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Moskovskogo Universiteta), 1985; Lyudmila Khrushkova, "Nikodim Pavlovich Kondakov," in *Personenlexikon zur christlichen Archäologie*, ed. Stefan Heid (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2012), 751–54; Ivan Foletti, *From Byzantium to Holy Russia: Nikodim Kondakov (1844–1925) and the Invention of the Icon* (Rome: Viella, 2017).

25 Nikodim Kondakov, *Opis' pamyatnikov drevnosti v nekotorykh khramakh Gruzii* [An inventory of ancient monuments in some temples in Georgia] (St. Petersburg: Tipografiya Ministerstva putey soobshcheniya, 1890); Nikodim Kondakov and Ivan Tolstoy, *Russkie Drevnosti v pamyatnikakh iskusstva. Vypusk chetvertyy. Khristianskie drevnosti Kryma, Kavkaza i Kiev* [Russian antiquities in art monuments. Volume four. Christian antiquities of Crimea, Caucasus, and Kiev] (St. Petersburg: Tipografiya Ministerstva putey soobshcheniya, 1891).

26 Ivan Foletti, "The Russian View of a 'Peripheral' Region: Nikodim P. Kondakov and the Southern Caucasus," *Convivium*, Supplement (2016): 20–35.

27 Nikodim Kondakov, *Makedoniya. Arkheologicheskoe puteshestvie* [Macedonia. Archaeological voyage] (St. Petersburg: Tipografiya Ministerstva putey soobshcheniya, 1909).

28 Ivan Foletti, *From Byzantium to Holy Russia*, 58–60.

Another aspect of Russian geopolitics is even more crucial for my argument that Russian imperialism translated into visual culture and architecture. Art in the service of power literally made the scholarly arguments developed in the czarist intellectual milieu visible. This point becomes clear from an examination of a series of buildings. Each is visually distinctive, but all are dedicated to Alexander Nevsky (1221–63), the legendary medieval prince of Novgorod who, after his canonization by the Orthodox church in 1547, became a symbol of Russian statehood.<sup>29</sup> In Tbilisi, for example, the construction of the Cathedral of Alexander Nevsky was begun in 1871 with the explicit intent of celebrating the subjugation of the entire southern Caucasus to Russian rule.<sup>30</sup>



**Fig. 2.5:** Tbilisi, Cathedral of Alexander Nevsky, 1871–1897; photograph by Dmitri Yermakov, ca. 1881–1916. Photo: Wikimedia Commons; public domain. [pastvu.com/174138](https://pastvu.com/174138) uploaded by rothast.

<sup>29</sup> Anna Navrotskaya, “Aleksandr Nevskii: Hagiography and National Biography,” *Cahiers du monde russe* 46, nos. 1–2 (2005): 297–304.

<sup>30</sup> Richard Wortman, “The ‘Russian Style’ in Church Architecture as Imperial Symbol after 1881,” in *Architectures of Russian Identity, 1500 to the Present*, ed. James Cracraft and Daniel B. Rowland (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 101–229; id., *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy from Peter the Great to the Abdication of Nicholas II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 251.

The style chosen was the purest form of neo-Byzantine architecture: a cross-shaped plan with a dome supported by four half-domes (Fig. 2.5). Several elements refer explicitly to Middle Byzantine models, including the *katholikon* of Hosios Loukas in mainland Greece or, for the large dome, Hagia Sophia itself. Compared with Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior, the Georgian structure therefore represents a major change: Byzantine architecture is no longer merely a conceptual and political inspiration but has become a concrete point of reference. The core of the idea, however, remains unchanged; here, too, Byzantine architecture makes Russian expansionism visible. Just as the Caucasus belonged to the Byzantine Empire, so must it belong to its Russian successor.

Another cathedral with the same dedication and stylistic morphology was completed in 1882 in Sofia.<sup>31</sup> Bulgaria was not ruled by the Romanov czars, but it was under their protection throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. The official reason for this building in the capital city was to express gratitude to the Russian Empire for liberating the Bulgarian people from the Ottoman yoke. The neo-Byzantine structure associated with the national saint stood as a tangible proof of nineteenth-century Bulgaria's integration into the Russian sphere of influence just as medieval Bulgaria had been subservient to the Byzantine emperor. The church built in 1877 in Belgrade, Serbia and dedicated to Nevsky can be seen in a similar light. It commemorated the Russian volunteers who fell in the war against the Ottomans.<sup>32</sup> The original form is unknown, but the current structure, begun in 1912, exhibits characteristics similar to other neo-Byzantine buildings. As in the other cases, architectural design, artistic style, and the dedication to Nevsky all proclaimed the czar's reach outside of the borders of the Russian empire.

The cathedral of Warsaw (1894–1912), officially built to accommodate the needs of the local Orthodox community, is a fourth major church dedicated to Nevsky (Fig. 2.6). The Kingdom of Poland was a rebellious part of the Russian Empire throughout most of the nineteenth century. After an uprising against Nicholas I in 1830–31, which was cruelly suppressed, it lost most of its political privileges. More than ten thousand Poles emigrated to the West; about eighty thousand were sent in chains to Siberia. A second major uprising in January 1863 had even worse consequences, culminating in the disappearance of Polish autonomy and a violent program of Russification.<sup>33</sup> The Russian domination inevitably affected the meaning of the cathedral. In style, it was neo-Russian rather than neo-Byzantine, with forms,

31 Igor' Kaliganov and Natal'ya Krashenninnikova, "Aleksandra Nevskogo Sobor v Sofii" [The Cathedral of Alexander Nevsky in Sofia], in *Pravoslavnaia Enciklopediia* (Moscow: Tserkovno-nauchnyi tsentr "Pravoslavnaia enciklopediia," 2000), 550–51.

32 Ivan Charota, "Aleksandra Nevskogo Sobor v Belgrade" [The Cathedral of Alexander Nevsky in Belgrade], in *Pravoslavnaia Enciklopediia*, 547.

33 See, for example, Stefan Kieniewicz, Andrzej Zahorski, Władysław Zajewski, *Trzy powstania narodowe: kościuszkowskie, listopadowe i styczniowe* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza 1994).





**Fig. 2.6:** Warsaw, Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, 1894–1912; photograph 1920. Photo: Library of Congress.

including the onion dome, explicitly referring to medieval Russian models such as the Cathedral of the Dormition in Moscow. The interior painted and mosaic decoration was commissioned from Viktor Vasnetsov (1848–1926), one of the major artists of late czarist Russia.<sup>34</sup> The chosen media connoted both Russian culture and Byzantine imperial authority. Mosaic, in particular, was not only associated with Byzantium (via the famous mosaics of Hagia Sophia) but also with medieval Russia because of its use in the early churches of Kyiv. As Iosif Gurko, governor-general of Poland, explicitly stated in 1893, the church in Warsaw—the tallest building in the city—had to manifest the Russification of the country.<sup>35</sup> The cathedral can thus be seen as a clear visualization of who was master in Warsaw and a declaration in no uncertain terms of where Poland be-

<sup>34</sup> Maria Gibellino Krasceninnicova, “Vasnetsov, Viktor Michajlovič,” in *Enciclopedia Italiana* (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1937), page unknown.

<sup>35</sup> Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, 254–55.

longed politically and historically. It is no accident that in the mid-1920s after the declaration of Polish independence it was razed to the ground.<sup>36</sup>

In churches of the second half of the nineteenth century, neo-Byzantine and neo-Russian architecture in combination with a dedication to Alexander Nevsky came to signify the Russian imperial project and mark its sphere of influence. A supposed shared past within the Byzantine world thus turned into a key argument for an expansive and aggressive geopolitics. In other words, at the end of czarist rule, Russia followed other world powers, notably Great Britain and France, not only in accepting imperialism and colonialism as standard political strategies but also in using art and scholarship as propaganda to justify territorial claims and defend expansionist interests.

## Lenin, Hitler, Stalin, and the Blood of Liberators as a Pretext for Imperialism

After the October Revolution of 1917, the official attitude of the Soviet Union, successor to czarist Russia, changed in a significant way. The new socialist state did not want to continue with the imperialist past and, in line with Marxist doctrine, ended its participation in the First World War with its colonial ramifications.<sup>37</sup> But if at the rhetorical level imperialism was firmly rejected, Lenin's project of a "world revolution," popular in the early years of the USSR, bore in reality more than a superficial resemblance to czarist imperialism. Still, sustained critiques of past expansionist policies were not lacking, especially with regard to those concerning the Caucasus. These were echoed by the art historian Mikhail Babenchikov (1890–1957), whose book on the art of the south Caucasus is an outstanding document of the official rejection of czarist colonialism and imperialism. He wrote: "Czarism," according to the words of comrade I. V. Stalin, "constrained and sometimes simply abolished the local school, theater, and educational institutions in order to keep the masses in darkness. Czarism suppressed any initiative by the best members of the local population. Finally, czarism killed every activity of the people on the outskirts of the country."<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Antoni Mironowicz, "The Destruction and Transfer of Orthodox Church Property in Poland, 1919–1939," *Polish Political Science Yearbook* 43 (2014): 405–20. For more on the destruction of this building, see the contribution by Marcus van der Meulen in this volume.

<sup>37</sup> Alexandre Sumpf, *La Grande Guerre oubliée: Russie 1914–1918* (Paris: Perrin, 2017), 404–8. For the sources see *Proceedings of the Brest-Litovsk Peace Conference: The Peace Negotiations between Russia and the Central Powers 21 November, 1917–3 March, 1918* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1918).

<sup>38</sup> Mikhail Babenchikov, *Narodnoe dekorativnoe iskusstvo Zakavkaz'ya i ego mastera* [The folk decorative art of Transcaucasia and its masters] (Moscow: Izdatelstvo i tipografiya Gosudarstvennogo arkhitekturnogo izdatelstva, 1948), 14.

In the first years after the October Revolution, the USSR actively tried to regain the provinces of the czarist empire that had been lost, including Georgia, Armenia, and Ukraine. But, for most of the 1920s and 1930s, the Soviet Union was preoccupied primarily with domestic matters, renouncing (at least in appearance) any colonial ambitions.<sup>39</sup> This rise of a proletarian and, on the face of it, non-imperialistic state might seem to explain the radical disconnect between Byzantine studies and Soviet policy. In fact, the causes of the split were much deeper: Marxism-Leninism was profoundly anticlerical and references to a Byzantine Christian empire as a historical foundation of the USSR became widely unpopular.<sup>40</sup> Many Russian Byzantinists, such as the elderly Kondakov or the young Andrey Grabar (1896–1990), had to flee, while those who remained were more or less explicitly persecuted.<sup>41</sup> Such ostracism was due to religious and political factors; a number of Russian Byzantinists had been particularly close to the czarist regime. In general, an aversion to the medieval past is increasingly evident in the historiography of those years, as if writing history and art history in the 1930s became a way of *judging* the past from a Marxist perspective.<sup>42</sup> This emerges clearly from the writings of Nikolay Brunov (1898–1971), who in 1935 started his chapter on the history of Byzantine architecture with what he claimed was a direct quote from Karl Marx: “Constantinople is the Eternal City, it is the Rome of the East.” But he then continued: “The Byzantine Empire was a feudal, theocratic, strictly centralized monarchy that in many ways resembles oriental despotism . . . . In Byzantium, all areas of cultural activity were strictly subordinated to religion, which is typical of the feudal worldview.”<sup>43</sup> The tone, moralizing and anachronistic, is typical of Marxist historical critique and shows the distance the new regime wanted to put between itself and the (medieval/Byzantine) past. In the historical and art-historical literature of the

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39 Andrew Andersen and George Partskhaladze, “La guerre soviéto-géorgienne et la soviétisation de la Géorgie (février-mars 1921),” *Revue historique des armées*, no. 254 (2009): 67–75.

40 Dmitry V. Pospelovsky, *A History of Soviet Atheism in Theory, and Practice, and the Believer*, vol. 1: *A History of Marxist–Leninist Atheism and Soviet Anti-Religious Policies* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1987).

41 Ivan Foletti, *From Byzantium to Holy Russia*, 60–83; Ivan Foletti and Adrien Palladino, *Byzantium or Democracy? Kondakov’s Legacy in Emigration: The Institutum Kondakovianum and André Grabar, 1925–1952* (Rome: Viella, 2020); Irina Kyzlasova, *Istoriya otechestvennoj nauki ob iskusstve Vizantii i drevney Rusi 1920–1930 gody. Po materialam arkhivov* [The history of patriotic studies dedicated to the art of Byzantium and of ancient Russia, 1920–1930: Based on archival material] (Moscow: Indrik, 2000).

42 Aleksey Nekrasov, *Vizantiyskoe i russkoe iskusstvo: Dlya stroitelstva fakultetov vuzov* [Byzantine and Russian art: For construction departments of universities] (Moscow: Izdanie Gosudarstvennogo Universal’nogo Magazina, 1924); Nikolay Brunov, *Ocherki po istorii arkhitektury*, vol. 2: *Greciya. Rim. Vizantiya*. [Essays on the history of architecture in 3 volumes. II: Greece, Rome, Byzantium] (Moscow: Academia, 1937), 11.

43 Brunov, *Ocherki po istorii arkhitektury*, 11–12. I have not been able to find where Marx made the remark cited by Brunov

period, Byzantium essentially became again what it had been during the eighteenth-century Enlightenment: a symbol of perversion and corruption.<sup>44</sup>

The key turning point in how the medieval past was viewed came in the summer of 1941 with the Second World War and the German invasion. The months of heavy losses that followed led the USSR to a radical change in its internal politics. After a decade of “internationalization” in the 1920s and another of “Russification” in the 1930s, the Soviet Union recognized the frustration of the non-Russian nations within the empire. This had been exploited by Hitler, especially in the Baltic republics and in Ukraine, and Stalin reacted by accepting a reversal of direction, one that liberalized religious worship and promoted national sentiments across the USSR.<sup>45</sup> Both were useful to wartime propaganda. The patriotic work of the Orthodox church during the early years of the war is not sufficient, however, to explain why Stalin in 1943 authorized the election of a new patriarch, effectively giving the Russian church unexpected freedom after decades of violent persecution. In the view of historian Adriano Rocucci, Stalin was by that date laying the groundwork for the Soviet Union’s future imperialistic expansion not only into its former territories but also into the Balkans.<sup>46</sup>

In essence, during the era of the Second World War, a religious “national” Middle Ages was enlisted in a desperate attempt to reverse wartime misfortunes. That ideological construct also entailed the return of Alexander Nevsky. He had resurfaced into national consciousness before, notably in Sergei Eisenstein’s celebrated movie which boosted patriotic feelings by presenting Nevsky as a Russian hero fighting against Teutonic enemies (Fig. 2.7). The film was finished in 1938, but because of the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact (which prohibited anti-German propaganda) it was not released until after the start of the war in 1941. Anna Navrotskaya has argued that the rebirth of Nevsky—who thanks to the new medium became a “cinema icon” as well as a “mass-saint”—indicated a deep desire on behalf of the leaders of the USSR to reconnect with the glorious past in an attempt to erase the profound interruptions of the ’20s and ’30s.<sup>47</sup>

In this context of national religious renaissance, it is not surprising that medieval and, in particular, Byzantine art also received more public recognition. During the war years, Viktor Lazarev (1897–1976) completed his monumental *Istoriya Vizantiyskoj Zhi-*

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44 The philosopher Montesquieu, for example, pronounced in a publication of 1734 that “the Greek Empire . . . is nothing but a tissue of revolts, seditions, and perfidies.” Cited after *Montesquieu’s Considerations of the Causes of the Grandeur and Decadence of the Romans*, trans. Jehu Baker (New York: D. Appleton, 1882), 437.

45 Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).

46 Adriano Rocucci, “Le tournant de la politique religieuse de Stalin: Pouvoir soviétique et église orthodoxe de 1943 à 1945,” *Cahiers du monde russe* 50 (2009): 671–98, at 672–76; Steven Merritt Miner, *Stalin’s Holy War: Religion, Nationalism, and Alliance Politics, 1941–1945* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

47 Navrotskaya uses “mass-saint” to describe a saint whose popularity spreads through the mass media. For this notion and the entire historical context see Navrotskaya, “Aleksandr Nevskii,” 302–4.



**Fig. 2.7:** Alexander Nevsky in a still from *Alexander Nevsky*, dir. Sergei Eisenstein, 1938–1941. Photo: Public domain.

*vopisi* (History of Byzantine Painting). This book, written from an unmistakable national perspective, countered previous imperialistic historiography by emphasizing the exceptional character and freedom of national painters, including Greek painters working in Russia and in the Balkans.<sup>48</sup> Other national Middle Ages, foremost those of Armenia and Georgia, returned at the same time to the forefront of official historiography in support of the “Great Patriotic War” (as the Second World War was called in the USSR).<sup>49</sup> The legalization of Orthodoxy and the new role played by individual nations, along with the uncontested authority of Stalin, quite unexpectedly resulted in the adoption of a political strategy that turned out to be very similar to that of the late nineteenth-century czarist regime. With only slight exaggeration one could say that the leadership of the Soviet Union reverted to Uvarov’s traditional slogan: Orthodoxy, autocracy, nation.

At the Yalta Conference in February 1945, Europe was divided between the Western allies and the Soviet Union. Thus, at the end of the war, Stalin, who had risen to the pinnacle of power through terrible purges and despite significant mili-

<sup>48</sup> Viktor Lazarev, *Istoriya Vizantijskoj Zhivopisi* [The history of Byzantine painting] (Moscow: Rossijskaya gosudarstvennaya biblioteka, 1947–48). On the connection with late tsarist rhetoric, see Ivan Foletti, “Belting Before Belting: From Moscow, to Constantinople, and to Georgia,” *Convivium*, Supplement 1 (2021): 18–25.

<sup>49</sup> Overview in Ivan Foletti and Pavel Rakitin, “Armenian Medieval Art and Architecture in Soviet Perception: A Longue Durée Sketch,” *Eurasiatica. Quaderni di Studi su Balcani, Anatolia, Iran, Caucaso e Asia Centrale* 7 (2020): 113–50.

tary setbacks, became what he had already predicted in 1943: the aging dictator of an empire (including satellite countries much beyond the borders of the USSR).<sup>50</sup> In 1945, the Soviet empire stretched from Siberia to the Baltic with Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, and other states gradually falling within the orbit of its power. Architecture and art continued to be central to the political agenda.<sup>51</sup> But if Byzantine studies, along with Orthodox faith itself, were experiencing a moment of revival, the same cannot be said about neo-Byzantine architecture. Modernist architecture, adopted right after the 1917 revolution, had given way to a deeply conservative movement that was couched in a grandiose style serving directly to promote Stalin's USSR.<sup>52</sup> Moscow's neo-Byzantine Cathedral of Christ the Savior, a key symbol of pre-revolutionary Russia, was blown up on 5 December 1931. The Communists had decided that it should be replaced by the Palace of Soviets.

Dominated by a gigantic statue of Lenin, this skyscraper, planned in the early '30s, was to be the city's tallest building; it combined modernist elements with new socialist realist features, mainly in its decoration (Fig. 2.8).<sup>53</sup> War and structural problems eventually prevented the Palace from being built, but the new style developed for it became a major architectural inspiration in the first decade after the war. This period saw the realization of a Muscovite project that would become emblematic of Stalinist architecture and of the USSR's growing ambitions: the skyscrapers later known as the "Seven Sisters" (Fig. 2.9).<sup>54</sup>

By their sheer size and through the images painted and sculpted on their exteriors and, especially, interiors—representations of the triumph of the working classes in scenes of factories, kolkhozes, and revolutionary events—these high-rise structures

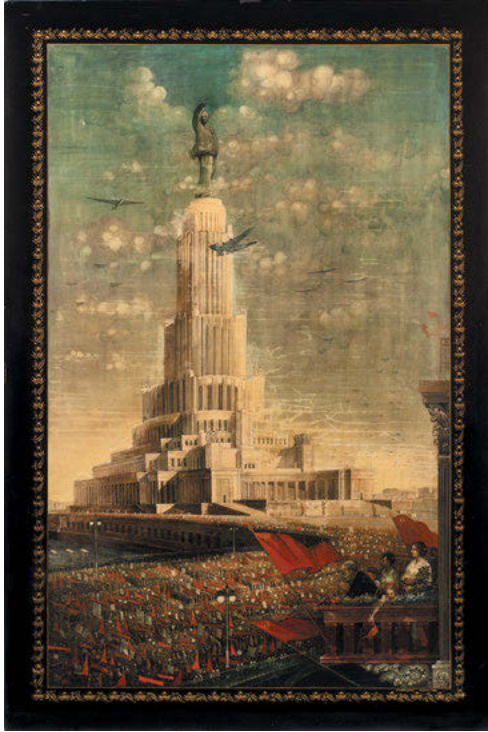
50 For the perception of the war "from below" (that is, from the perspective of the local population), see, for example, the stimulating book edited by Emilia Koustova, *Combattre, survivre, témoigner: Expériences soviétiques de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale* (Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 2020).

51 On the relationship between the Soviet regime and architecture, private and public, see Victor Buchli, *An Archaeology of Socialism* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2000); Heather D. Dehaan, *Stalinist City Planning: Professionals, Performance, and Power* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

52 See, among others, Vladimir Paperny, *Architecture in the Age of Stalin: Culture Two*, trans. John Hill and Roann Barris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Igor' Kazus', *Sovetskaya arkhitektura 1920-h godov: Organizaciya proektirovaniya* [Soviet architecture of the 1920s: Design organization] (Moscow: Progress-Tradiciya, 2009); Danilo Udovicki-Selb, "Between Modernism and Socialist Realism: Soviet Architectural Culture under Stalin's Revolution from Above, 1928–1938," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 78 (2009): 467–95.

53 Karolina Foletti, "Cathedral of Christ the Savior," 39–44. For the general urbanistic conception of Moscow see Élisabeth Essaïan, "Le Plan général de la reconstruction de Moscou de 1935: La Ville, l'architecte et le politique: Héritages culturels et pragmatisme économique," *Les Annales de la recherche urbaine* 107 (2011): 46–57.

54 Jana Gazdagová, "Sedm Sester," in *Zápisky z cest: Moskva, Novgorod*, ed. Ivan Foletti, Karolina Foletti, and Martin F. Lešák (Brno: MUNIPRESS, 2017), 93–95; Nikolay Kruzhkov, *Vysotki stalinskoy Moskvy. Nasledie epochi* [The Stalinist Moscow high-rises: The Legacy of an era] (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2014).



**Fig. 2.8:** Alexander Kotyagin, *Palace of Soviets*, 1938; the Palace was designed by Boris Iofan, Vladimir Shchuko, and Vladimir Helfreich in 1931–32. Moscow, All-Russian Museum of Decorative Arts. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

were to embody in a very public arena the glory of the proletariat and, at the same time, materialize the power of the Soviet Union (the skyscraper, which had emerged as a radically new building type in America in the late nineteenth century, still was an architectural newcomer in the USSR). Combining a modernist structure with classicizing socialist realist decorations, the seven buildings served a variety of functions, including housing the Ministry of the Interior, Moscow University, a hotel, and a home for Soviet writers. The Seven Sisters became one of the most iconic building projects in postwar Moscow. It is therefore not surprising that they also became the face of power—of Stalinist power—and, as had been the case with neo-Byzantine architecture during the nineteenth century, a model for architectural colonization.



**Fig. 2.9:** M.V. Lomonosov, Moscow State University, 1949–53, one of the “Seven Sisters” buildings. Photo: Lynn Greyling (CCO public domain).



**Fig. 2.10:** Prague, Hotel Internacionál, 1952–56. Photo: Simon Leger/Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 4.0 International).



Copies of the Seven Sisters were created in Prague and Warsaw in the 1950s (Fig. 2.10). Similar buildings, though smaller in scale, can also be found in Sofia, Rostov-on-Don, and even in Beijing.<sup>55</sup> Echoing the prototypes in Moscow, their composition and iconography stood as an official celebration of the working people. But I am convinced that they also served to proclaim the USSR's sphere of influence, in the same way that czarist Russia had used architecture to proclaim its dominion. Just as the neo-Byzantine style was the obligatory visual language for sacred buildings across the nineteenth-century empire, so the combination of socialist realism with classicizing structure created a visual semantic unit across the USSR and its satellite states to promote the glory of the proletariat.<sup>56</sup>

While this kind of official Soviet architecture was removed from the czarist neo-Byzantine style, other artistic choices dictated by Stalinist cultural policy relate more closely to our story. Glass mosaic, notably, was the medium chosen for several stations of the Moscow subway built right before and after World War II. One of the most impressive examples is the Komsomolskaya station. Opened in 1952, its decorative program was directly inspired by a speech Stalin gave in November 1941 in which he evoked historical leaders of the Russian state who had inspired the country's army and secured great victories for its people. To this collection of episodes from the past and present, including depictions of the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany, were added figures from medieval history. Among them was the unavoidable Alexander Nevsky; represented as a medieval knight triumphing over the Teutonic Order, he was meant to symbolize victory over enemies of the country in general (Fig. 2.11).<sup>57</sup> To celebrate the recent defeat of Nazi Germany, a very nationalistic narrative of Russian history was therefore mobilized, one that used, surprisingly enough, the technique of mosaic. The medieval heritage and the Byzantine tradition (as well as their nineteenth-century revivals) were ever present in the visual rhetoric of the postwar Soviet empire.

The choice to build the Palace of the Soviets on the site where the Cathedral of Christ the Savior once stood, the use of imperial architecture to visually colonize satellite states, the revival of mosaics in triumphalist self-representations, and the Orthodox revival coupled with that of Byzantine-nationalist studies all clearly show how the Soviet system had adopted, at least after World War II and despite a sharp break in the official rhetoric, some key elements of the artistic politics of czarist Russia. The cult of the autocrat had of course been replaced by that of the party (and its leaders); essential traits of the former way of thinking, however, persisted.

55 Anatole Kopp, *L'Architecture de la période stalinienne* (Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1978); Paperny, *Architecture in the Age of Stalin*. Other case studies include Jörg Kirchner, "Die Lange Straße in Rostock (1953–58): Heimatschutzstil als eine Quelle der frühen DDR-Architektur," *ICOMOS* 58 (2013): 66–69; Věra Müllerová, *Hotel Internacional—Stavebně historický průzkum* [Hotel Internacional—Historical survey] (Prague: PSSPOP, 1995).

56 Udovicki-Selb, "Between Modernism and Socialist Realism."

57 Josette Bouvard, *Le Métro de Moscou: La construction d'un mythe soviétique* (Paris: Éditions du Sextant, 2005).



decades of proletarian dictatorship, the country was missing a clear ideology.<sup>59</sup> Given this situation, the Orthodox Church, now shining with the martyr's gloss acquired during the Soviet years, began to regain its former prestige. From the mid-1990s onward, if not earlier, a new linking of “throne and altar” can be observed. It led to a phenomenon that has been called “desecularization,” meaning a strengthening of the Church without a corresponding increase in personal piety.<sup>60</sup>

An explicit outcome of this development was the reconstruction of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow between 1994 and 1997.<sup>61</sup> The proposal to rebuild a monument demolished by the Stalinist regime originally came from the sculptor Vladimir Mokrousov (1936–2021) during the perestroika years in the late '80s.<sup>62</sup> The religious confraternity he founded received permission from city authorities to erect a small chapel in memory of the destroyed cathedral. When, after 1994, both the Church and the state took control of the site, Patriarch Alexis II (1929–2008) dissolved the confraternity and commissioned a new, more ambitious building.<sup>63</sup> While the construction of the chapel resulted from Orthodox piety, this new project was mainly a political act. It is, therefore, not by chance that it received a “blessing” from President Boris Yeltsin (1931–2007) in words that made clear how religion was inextricably linked to political goals: “Today, Russia needs the Cathedral of Christ the Savior. It is a Russian national shrine and it should be revived. With it, it will be easier for all of us to find the way to social cohesion, to the creation of goodness, and to the creation of the life in which there will be less space for sin. With all my heart, I support your initiative.”<sup>64</sup> A crucial, if controversial, figure in seeing the building come to fruition was the mayor of Moscow, Yuri Luzhkov (1936–2019).<sup>65</sup> As the actual patron of the whole enterprise, Luzhkov drew open criticism for the way he secured funds from

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59 David M. Kotz and Fred Weir, *Russia's Path from Gorbachev to Putin: The Demise of the Soviet System and the New Russia* (London: Routledge, 2007); Allyson Edwards and Roberto Rabbia, “The ‘Wild Nineties’: Youth Engagement, Memory and Continuities between Yeltsin's and Putin's Russia,” in *Youth and Memory in Europe: Defining the Past, Shaping the Future*, ed. Félix Krawatzek and Nina Friess (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 75–83; Peter J. S. Duncan, “Contemporary Russian Identity between East and West,” *The Historical Journal* 48 (2005): 277–94.

60 Vyacheslav Karpov, “Desecularization: A Conceptual Framework,” *Journal of Church and State* 52 (2010): 232–70; Karolina Foletti, “Cathedral of Christ the Savior,” 48–49.

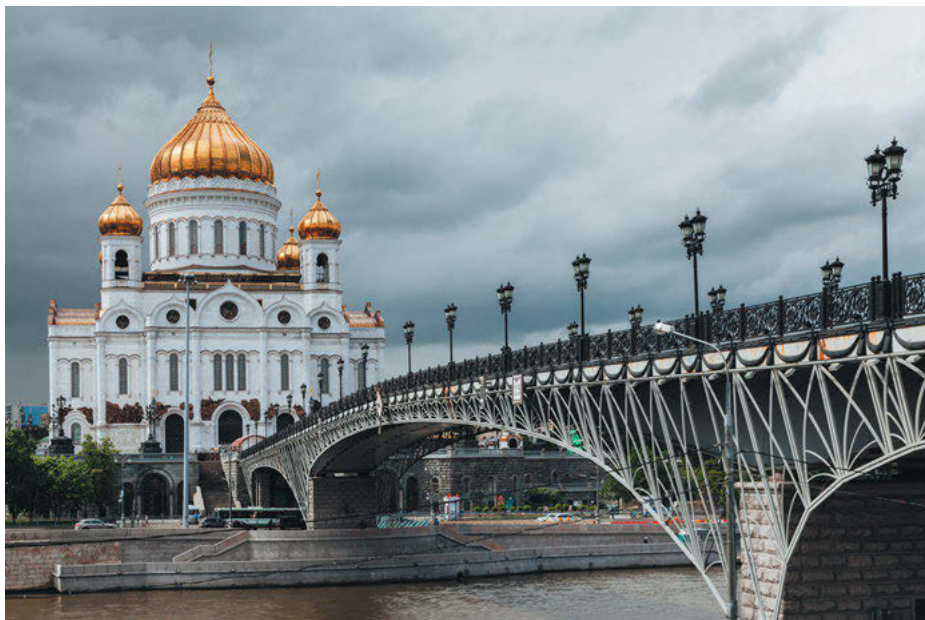
61 Karolina Foletti, “Cathedral of Christ the Savior,” 46–65.

62 Kathleen Smith, “An Old Cathedral for a New Russia: The Symbolic Politics of the Reconstituted Church of Christ the Saviour,” *Religion, State and Society* 25 (1997): 163–75.

63 Karolina Foletti, “Cathedral of Christ the Savior,” 59.

64 Boris Yeltsin, “Obrashchenie prezidenta rossiyskoj federacii k chlenam obshchesvennogo nablyudatel'nogo soveta po vossozdaniyu Chrama Christa Spasitelya” [Address of the President of the Russian Federation to the members of the public supervisory board for cooperation with the Cathedral of Christ the Savior], *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 7 September 1994; cited in the translation from Karolina Foletti, “Cathedral of Christ the Savior,” 50.

65 Donald N. Jensen, “The Boss: How Yuri Luzhkov Runs Moscow,” *Demokratizatsiya* 8 (2000): 83–122.



**Fig. 2.12:** Moscow, Cathedral of Christ the Savior, 1994–97. Photo: Ted.ns/Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 4.0 International).

sources close to the criminal sphere. Moreover, in a period of economic crisis and growing poverty, such an expensive building was understandably seen as a sign of arrogance.<sup>66</sup>

To become a “Russian national shrine,” implicitly reconnecting it with the imperial past, the new construction was to follow the visual layout of the original building. In other words, the neo-Russian (or neo-Byzantine) tradition had to be restored. Yeltsin’s Russia was eager to hitch itself to the legacy of the Romanovs; only a few years later, in 2000, the last czar, Nicholas II, who had been murdered by the Bolsheviks, was canonized together with other family members.<sup>67</sup> It is as if seventy years of Communism had simply been erased. On a superficial level, the new Cathedral of Christ the Savior participated in this act of cancellation because, from afar, it looks like the original structure dating to 1839–83 (Fig. 2.12). In reality, things are more complicated, starting with the materials: concrete replaced the original brick; an alloy with a low percentage of gold took the place of the pure gold on the roofs; and bronze was used instead of marble for the sculptures on the exterior.<sup>68</sup> The most radical changes were, however, hidden un-

<sup>66</sup> Karolina Foletti, “Cathedral of Christ the Savior,” 59–62.

<sup>67</sup> “Nicholas II and Family Canonized for ‘Passion,’” *New York Times*, 15 August 2000.

<sup>68</sup> Ekaterina Gorelova, “V soznanii mnogich vosstanovlenie Khrama Khrista Spasitelya v Moskve nerazryvno svyazano s figuroy Il’i Glazunova” [In the minds of the majority the reconstruction of the

derground: a newly added basement that accommodates a six-hundred-car garage, a thousand-seat conference hall, a restaurant, and other purely utilitarian spaces.<sup>69</sup> These subterranean additions made the building particularly controversial because they were interpreted as an almost shameless union between the new Russian Orthodoxy and the new economic system, capitalism.<sup>70</sup> In short, an elegant, high-quality original building was replaced by a cheaper copy, but (importantly) one that was ready for the celebrations of the 850<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the city of Moscow in September of 1997.

Despite all the criticism, the restored building in the neo-neo-Russian style has become a symbol of a new chapter in the coexistence of church and state in the Russian Federation. José Casanova's concept of "public religion" is appropriate here, since it identifies religion as a type of collective identity that has nothing to do with personal faith.<sup>71</sup> In the 1990s, 75 percent of Russians considered themselves Orthodox; paradoxically, only 40 percent classed themselves as "believers" and only a minority attended religious services.<sup>72</sup> Thus almost half of the people who identified as Orthodox did not believe in God or participate in any sort of religious life. Such poll figures are very likely the result of the close links, following the fall of the Soviet Union, between the Orthodox Church and "ethnic Russians," people who consider themselves as inextricably belonging to the Russian nation. The architectural choice of a sort of "back to the future" for the Cathedral of Christ the Savior reconnected them with the imperialist past; this, in turn, facilitated tying the new Russian identity to deep-seated nationalistic elements. The nineteenth century and, filtered through it, the medieval past were thus used as instruments of ethno-aggregation and, inevitably, of exclusion of those who were not considered to belong to the Russian nation. Beneath that surface, however, a deep cleavage divided the identity discourse and the economic interests driving Russia's new "savage capitalism."

It is worth noting that, in the 1990s, Byzantine (and medieval Russian) studies experienced a rebirth as well. After seventy years of USSR censorship, it again became possible to do research on the prerevolutionary period, which was sometimes presented in almost heroic terms.<sup>73</sup> That scholarship is not without parallels to the newly

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cathedral of Christ the Savior is connected with the figure of Ilya Glazunov], *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, 22 November 1995.

69 Aleksey Denisov, "Ot Rozhdestva do Rozhdestva [From Christmas to Christmas]," *Architektura i stroitel'stvo Moskvy* 1 (1996): 26.

70 Karolina Foletti, "Cathedral of Christ the Savior," 61–64.

71 José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); id., "Public Religion Revisited," in *Religion: Beyond the Concept*, ed. Hent de Vries (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 101–19.

72 Kimmo Kaariainen and Furman Dmitri, "Religiosity in Russia in the 1990s," in *Religious Transition in Russia*, ed. Matti Kotiranta (Helsinki: Kikimora Publications, 2000), 28–76.

73 See, for example, Olga Etingof, *Vizantijskie ikony pervoy poloviny XIII veka v Rossii* [Byzantine icons of the first half of the thirteenth century in Russia] (Moscow: Indrik, 2005), 23–32.

built Cathedral of Christ the Savior, down to the fact that Byzantine studies, while regaining momentum, lost in status (just as the church lost in quality materials). In the post-Soviet free-market world, the study of the past—and the medieval past in particular—became marginal because historical studies no longer held any of the prerevolutionary prestige (or, therefore, levels of funding).

Recently, the desire to reconnect with the “glorious” imperial past has picked up momentum. A growing number of churches are being constructed in the neo-neo-Russian (or neo-neo-Byzantine) style. Furthermore, at least from the 2000s onward, the imperial rhetoric, insisting on the importance of Orthodoxy for the state, has been increasingly present in the public sphere. Vladimir Putin and his entourage have endeavored to stress parallels between his “reign” and those of Byzantine emperors, reaffirming the tradition of Moscow as the “Third Rome” (the successor to the medieval “Second Rome,” Constantinople).<sup>74</sup> After his visit to Mount Athos in 2016, Putin was accused of having sat on what some (wrongly) believed was the Byzantine imperial throne; this opened a large debate in the media.



**Fig. 2.13:** Janette Rendeková, *Pussy Riot in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, Moscow, 2014*. Photo: Used with permission of the artist.

<sup>74</sup> “Igra v prestoly. Pochemu Rossiya bol’she 500 let ostaetsya v trende vizantijskoj politiki” [Game of thrones: Why Russia has remained in the trend of Byzantine politics for over 500 years], *Gazeta.ru*, 30 May 2016, [https://www.gazeta.ru/comments/2016/05/30\\_e\\_8271917.shtml](https://www.gazeta.ru/comments/2016/05/30_e_8271917.shtml).

Another likely turning point was the “punk prayer” staged in 2012 by the group Pussy Riot in the very building we have been talking about, the Cathedral of Christ the Savior. During the event, the four women, wearing balaclavas as an emblem of anti-institutional protest, danced in front of the iconostasis (the icon screen separating nave from choir) and sang a prayer asking the Mother of God to drive out Patriarch Kirill and oust President Putin. The prayer, a work of performance art, sharply criticized the political alliance between state and Church (Fig. 2.13).<sup>75</sup> Unsurprisingly, the deliberately provocative event was denounced by the official media as a crime against the Orthodox Church, meaning against Russia. As a result, two of Pussy Riot’s members, Maria Alekhina and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, were sentenced to two years in prison.<sup>76</sup>

From then on, an increasingly aggressive political discourse amplified by the Russian state media targeted the Western world and its supposedly decadent values (the performance by Pussy Riot was presented in precisely those terms). By contrast, Russian values built on Orthodoxy and rooted in the medieval past were promoted as a positive alternative.<sup>77</sup> Drawing on a highly reductive interpretation of Russian philosophy and theology, especially as it developed over the nineteenth century, the country was now hailed by the government as the only possible Christian alternative to the decadent West.<sup>78</sup> At the same time, the past was and continues to be used to justify the neo-imperial ideology of the country’s leadership. This strategy became especially clear during the war in Georgia in 2008 and, even more so, during the first and second occupations of Ukrainian territories in 2014 and 2022. In that context of neo-imperial aggression, Russia’s medieval roots, stemming from the Byzantine empire, were systematically highlighted with the result that St. Sophia Cathedral of Kyiv ended up being presented as a cornerstone of Russian national identity.<sup>79</sup> At the same time, increasing tensions with the West have become evident since at least 2012. Particularly revealing of the current propagandistic climate is the production of big-budget films and TV series that highlight the heroic nature of Orthodox Russian and Byzantine identity; one thinks of the very successful series about Sophia Palaiologina, a princess from the imperial Byzantine family who went to Russia to marry the prince of Moscow Ivan

<sup>75</sup> Joachim Willems, *Pussy Riots Punk-Gebet: Religion, Recht und Politik in Russland* (Berlin: Berlin University Press, 2013).

<sup>76</sup> “Sud priznal uchastnits Pussy Riot vinovnymi v khuliganstve po motivam religioznoy nenavisti i vrazhdy” [Court Finds Pussy Riot members guilty of hooliganism motivated by religious hatred and enmity], *ITAR-TASS*, 17 August 2012.

<sup>77</sup> For a critical overview, see Cyril Hovorun, “Russian Church and Ukrainian War,” *The Expository Times* (2022): 1–10.

<sup>78</sup> Hovorun, “Russian Church and Ukrainian War.”

<sup>79</sup> Mikhail Tyurenkov, “Vladimir Vladimirovich Avgust. Rossiya mezhdu bonaputizmom i Imperiej” [Vladimir Vladimirovich August: Russia between Bonaputism and empire], *Pervyy russkiy tsargrad*, 8 June 2022; [https://tsargrad.tv/articles/Vladimir-vladimirovich-avgust-rossija-mezhdu-bonaputizmom-i-imperiej\\_562187](https://tsargrad.tv/articles/Vladimir-vladimirovich-avgust-rossija-mezhdu-bonaputizmom-i-imperiej_562187).

III.<sup>80</sup> This imperialistic-Byzantine rhetoric is promoted by Putin's entourage as a natural development of Russian identity; in reality, it was generated in reaction to sustained critiques, including the massive protest against his reelection to the presidency after the term of Dmitry Medvedev in 2012, and should therefore be seen as the result of an internal agenda bent on creating an external enemy.<sup>81</sup>

## Conclusions

In conclusion, we can observe that for more than two centuries the Middle Ages served as a strong identity tool for modern Russia. At every moment of crisis, the medieval visual, intellectual, and religious heritage was mobilized to reassert the country's (fictional) historic lineage and bolster its hegemonic claims toward external territories, especially the Balkans, Armenia, Georgia, and Ukraine. If, in the reign of the last Romanovs, such claims to continuity seemed in some ways logical and in step with what was happening in contemporary (and competing) Western empires, more surprising and complicated is the use of the same past in the Soviet era. Presently, we are witnessing a return to cultural patterns which had peaked, in their core elements, during nineteenth-century czarism. Yet whichever form these historicist agendas have taken, the past as such was not of real interest: it was the present use of it.

It is within this framework that we can return to where we started. In Moscow's Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ, all the visual and material elements mentioned in the course of this essay were brought together to construct an ideal narrative of Russian identity. The building refers all at once to the medieval past, its nineteenth-century revivals, and its mid-twentieth-century reuse. This is visible not only in the general neo-neo-Russian architectural layout or in the neo-neo-Byzantine (and at the same time neo-Soviet) iconography, but also in the very use of mosaics as the primary medium for depicting the monumentalized figures of Nevsky, Stalin, and Putin. The cathedral's celebrations of medieval and modern military leaders are an overt reference to Stalinist-era metro decorations and, through them, to an idealized image of the "glorious" national past. In light of the military invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the clever remodeling can be seen as one of the preparatory steps of the Russian Federation's expansionist and blatantly neo-imperialist aspirations. Here, visually and conceptually, the regime adheres to a message perpetuated by the mass media: Moscow, as the Third Rome, is the last bastion of Orthodoxy. Under its leader, it has a moral obligation to intervene, even with military force, against the

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<sup>80</sup> The series is available at <https://smotrim.ru/brand/60541>. For information on it, see Kino-Teatr.Ru, "Sophia," <https://www.kino-teatr.ru/kino/movie/ros/118099/titr/>.

<sup>81</sup> Daniel Sandford, "Russian Election: Biggest Protests Since Fall of USSR," *BBC News*, 10 December 2011, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-16122524>.



evil that is rampant in a West it calls “fascist” and a Ukraine it describes as “Nazi.” It is obvious that the aim of this huge propaganda effort ultimately is to make the Russian public forget the dramatic economic stagnation, the deep crisis faced by a variety of national institutions, and the systemic injustices caused by the Putin regime. It is equally obvious, however, how ineffective this propaganda is, considering how empty Russian churches are, no matter how powerful the Orthodox Church has become. The propagandistic tradition initiated in nineteenth-century czarist Russia that reused the medieval heritage, specifically the legacy of Byzantine art and architecture, has turned into a mere facade.



Bernd Carqué

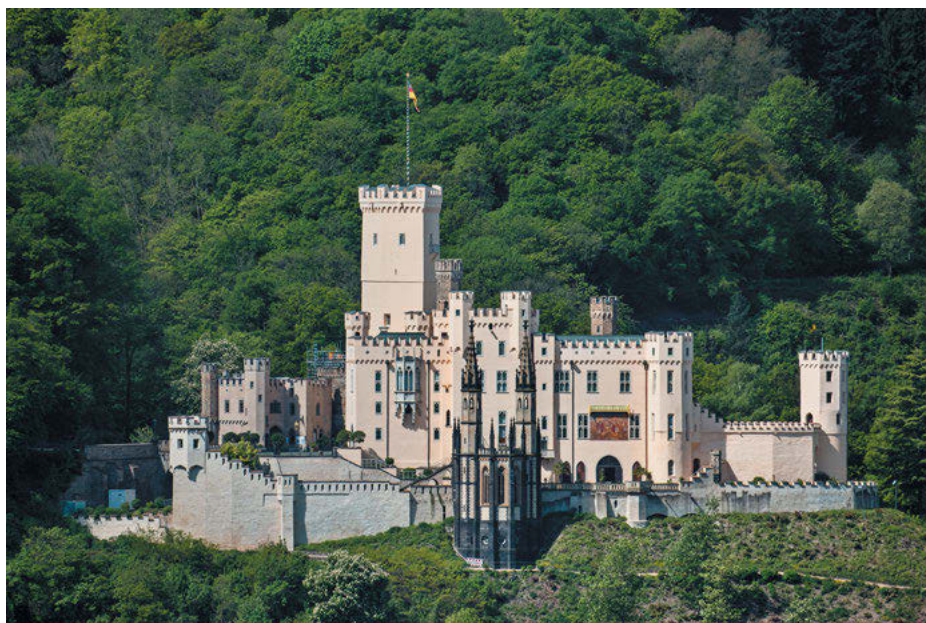
## Constructing Modern Meanings by Rebuilding Medieval Ruins: The Castles of Stolzenfels, Haut-Koenigsbourg, and Trifels in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries



**Fig. 3.1:** Map showing location of the castles on the Upper and Middle Rhine. Photo: adapted from Lencer and NordNordWest/Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 3.0).

Over a period of some 130 years, Germany capitalized on the animosity toward its perceived “hereditary enemy” (*Erbfeind*) France—using highly symbolic gestures and actual financial outlay—to execute three costly construction projects in the Upper and Middle Rhine regions (Fig. 3.1). At the castles of Stolzenfels, Haut-Koenigsbourg, and Trifels, lavish new buildings were erected on the ruins of medieval castle complexes under the patronage of the Kingdom of Prussia, the Second German Empire, and the National Socialist state. The configuration and formal language of these buildings con-

tain unmistakable references to the past. In all three cases, the intention was to give monumental expression to territorial sovereignty in regions bordering France that had only very recently been conquered militarily or consolidated politically. And in each case, the patron purposely adopted the medieval past as a foundational narrative and strove to construct historical continuity. These three buildings, the main case studies of this essay, are thus particularly well suited for working out key questions revolving around the political instrumentalization of the Middle Ages in the modern era and how inherited cultural material was appropriated and assigned new meaning.



**Fig. 3.2:** Koblenz, Stolzenfels Castle from the east. Photo: Holger Weinandt/Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 3.0 DE).

In 1815, shortly after the Congress of Vienna granted sovereignty over the Rhine Province to the Kingdom of Prussia, the ruins of the castle of the elector of Trier at Stolzenfels were transformed into an imposing summer residence for the Hohenzollern family (Fig. 3.2).<sup>1</sup> Stolzenfels was founded on the banks of the Middle Rhine near Koblenz around 1244 by the archbishop of Trier as a toll castle for the electorate. It was enlarged considerably over the years, particularly under Baldwin of Luxembourg

<sup>1</sup> Ursula Rathke, *Preußische Burgenromantik am Rhein* (Munich: Prestel, 1979), 46–115; Generaldirektion Kulturelles Erbe Rheinland-Pfalz, ed., *Stolzenfels* (Petersberg: Imhof, 2020); Robert A. Taylor, *The Castles of the Rhine* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 1998); Jan Werquet, *Historismus und Repräsentation* (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2010).

(1285–1354) and Kuno II of Falkenstein (ca. 1320–88), and was destroyed in 1689 by French troops during the War of the Palatine Succession. In 1823, the crown prince and later king of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm IV (1795–1861), received the ruins as a gift from the city of Koblenz; between 1836 and 1847 he had them reconstructed in the form of a medievalizing castle, first by Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1781–1841) and then by Friedrich August Stüler (1800–65).



**Fig. 3.3:** Orschwiller, Haut-Koenigsbourg Castle from the southeast. Photo: Bogdan Lazar/dreamstime.com.

Five decades later, the same monarch's great-nephew, Emperor Wilhelm II (1859–1941), commissioned the architect and castle researcher Bodo Ebhardt (1865–1945) to restore Haut-Koenigsbourg near Sélestat in Alsace (Fig. 3.3).<sup>2</sup> Though constructed some time before, it is first mentioned in the records in 1147 as an imperial castle of the Hohenstaufen dynasty. Haut-Koenigsbourg was destroyed for the first time in 1462 by the Palatine elector. Subsequently, it came as a Hapsburg fiefdom into the hands of the counts of Thierstein, who in 1479 had it comprehensively restored and developed as a fortress. During the Thirty Years' War (1618–48), it was captured by Swedish troops and, shortly thereaf-

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Biller, *Die Hohkönigsburg im Mittelalter* (Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2020); Ludger Fischer, *Bodo Ebhardt* (Braubach: Deutsche Burgenvereinigung, 2010), 21–40; Monique Fuchs, "Die Hohkönigsburg," in *Burgenromantik und Burgenrestaurierung um 1900*, ed. Deutsche Burgenvereinigung (Braubach: Deutsche Burgenvereinigung, 1999), 48–67.



ter, burned down once and for all. Between 1900 and 1908, after Prussia's conquest of the regions bordering France during the Franco-Prussian War (1870–71) brought them together as the imperial territory (*Reichsland*) of Alsace-Lorraine, the ruins became a monumental symbol of German sovereignty and were used as a museum.



**Fig. 3.4:** Annweiler, Trifels Castle from the east. Photo: Wikimedia Commons/N-nrg (CC BY-SA 4.0 International).

It was not until thirty years later that Trifels Castle near Annweiler in the southern Palatinate began to be renovated (Fig. 3.4).<sup>3</sup> At this time, the ruins stood in the middle of the Palatinate-Saar province (Gau Pfalz-Saar), which had been created when the Saar region was reincorporated into the German Reich in 1935. From 1940 onwards, after the German annexation of the French Moselle department, this territory was part of the Gau Westmark that marked the border with France. Trifels, an imperial castle dating back to the Hohenstaufen, was renowned as both an occasional place for the safekeeping of the imperial regalia and as the dungeon where the English King Richard I (the Lionheart) was kept prisoner. It was abandoned shortly after being damaged in 1602 by a bolt of lightning. At the instigation of Ludwig Siebert (1874–1942),

<sup>3</sup> Bernhard Meyer, *Burg Trifels* (Kaiserslautern: Institut für pfälzische Geschichte und Volkskunde, 2001); Fabian Link, *Burgen und Burgenforschung im Nationalsozialismus* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2014); Susanne Fleischner, “Schöpferische Denkmalpflege”: *Kulturideologie des Nationalsozialismus und Positionen der Denkmalpflege* (Münster: LIT, 1999).

prime minister of Bavaria, and with the financial support of Adolf Hitler, the rebuilding of the castle as a “national shrine” (*ationale Weihestätte*) and “imperial memorial” (*Reichsehrenmal*) began. The architect Rudolf Esterer (1879–1965) planned the reconstruction, the outlines of which were retained until 1966.

These three buildings exemplify particularly radical forms of appropriation and signification. This is because the ways we view and understand them do not depend on external meanings that derive from other, secondary media. Instead, the changes to the buildings that shape their interpretation are found in the structures themselves. This makes architecture quite different from objects presented in museums, which are endowed with new meanings through association, contextualization, and commentary; and, likewise, from pictorial representation (such as painting or photography) because that transposes its subjects into other media and therefore other contexts.<sup>4</sup> By contrast, the reshaping of buildings—which in the history of architecture is discussed under the concept of “reconstruction”—involves the historical remains themselves.<sup>5</sup> These remains thus are simultaneously the subject of an interpretation, the site and medium through which interpretation takes place, and fully part of the newly erected buildings. Unlike the shifting frameworks of museum displays or the multifarious changes in expression encountered in visual representations, architectural recreations intervene physically in the extant fabric of a monument.<sup>6</sup> And because that process takes place in the same medium—architecturally, rather than, for example, through a reconstruction drawing or an architectural model—the historical remains and the modern reshaping are indistinguishably woven together in multiple ways.<sup>7</sup>

Determining more closely the nature and scope of these kinds of architectural interpretations and assessing the factors that are critical to them presents a specific analytical challenge. Take the comparative examples studied here: they present three profoundly different architectural solutions despite comparable geopolitical starting points, ideological leitmotifs, and lines of reasoning.<sup>8</sup> All three buildings were con-

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4 Wolfgang Brückle, Pierre Alain Mariaux, and Daniela Mondini, eds., *Musealisierung mittelalterlicher Kunst* (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2015); Bernd Carqué, Daniela Mondini, and Matthias Noell, eds., *Visualisierung und Imagination* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006). For case studies on different instrumentalization strategies, see Maike Steinkamp and Bruno Reudenbach, eds., *Mittelalterbilder im Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin: Akademie, 2013).

5 Winfried Nerdinger, ed., *Geschichte der Rekonstruktion—Konstruktion der Geschichte* (Munich: Prestel, 2010); Adrian von Buttlar et al., eds., *Denkmalpflege statt Attrappenkult* (Gütersloh: Bauverlag, 2010); Arnold Bartetzky, ed., *Geschichte bauen* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2017).

6 The same is fundamentally true for all modern conservation and restoration measures, but rarely is such a high degree of political meaning ascribed to them as happens with historic reconstructions.

7 It is therefore essential to distinguish reconstruction from the practices associated with demonstrative spoliation; on which see Hans-Rudolf Meier, *Spolien* (Berlin: Jovis, 2020).

8 Research into how the buildings treated here relate to one another has been undertaken only for Haut-Koenigsbourg and Trifels; see Günter Stein, “Trifels und Hohkönigsburg,” *Oberrheinische Studien* 3 (1975): 373–404 (which, however, is limited to discourse analysis).

structed after periods of territorial and political upheaval and all were located in sensitive border regions where, as monuments symbolizing sovereignty, they were intended to epitomize the power to protect against the hereditary enemy that France was considered to be. All did this by evoking local traditions of territorial sovereignty that purportedly reached back to the Middle Ages.<sup>9</sup> At Haut-Koenigsbourg and Trifels, explicit references were made to castles of the Holy Roman Empire and to the imperial rule of the Hohenstaufen dynasty, while at Stolzenfels and Haut-Koenigsbourg, it was members of the Hohenzollern dynasty who were the patrons of these political symbols.

Yet despite these overlaps, one can hardly fail to notice that the three buildings differ greatly in appearance. Stolzenfels Castle is characterized by broad-based, compact buildings with strikingly rich fenestration. The structures are bound together by the marked horizontals of the crowning crenellation and the balustrades. In contrast, Haut-Koenigsbourg presents a defensive complex with buildings that rise in stages over many levels above the stepped curtain walls and the ramparts farther out; it has a rich variety of spires that lend it a lively silhouette. Trifels is yet again different. Here, the castle is reduced to a small number of basic stereometric forms, and the tight, blocklike construction is interrupted only occasionally by corbel tables and paired lancets. It completely lacks features typical of a medieval defensive structure, such as machicolations, battlements, and arrow slits.

These differences require an explanation. Are they specific to each set of remains, the result of the different times at which the original buildings were constructed (Haut-Koenigsbourg and Trifels date to the High Middle Ages, while Stolzenfels is late medieval)? Or should the variations be traced back to the point at which the modern historicizing rebuilding took place? In other words, are changes in architectural historicism between 1840 and 1940, especially those associated with the so-called Castle Renaissance, the decisive factor?<sup>10</sup> Or are changing conceptions of how the past can be exploited and made present at the root of the diverse configurations and formal languages of these buildings? Did changing ideas of history determine (differently in each case) how the monumental remains were architecturally appropriated? Finally, to what extent did those evolving concepts conform to the diverse political aims of the buildings' patrons?

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Jeismann, *Das Vaterland der Feinde* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1992); Hélène Miard-Delacroix and Guido Thieme, eds., *Der Rhein* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2018).

<sup>10</sup> Michael Brix and Monika Steinhauser, eds., *"Geschichte allein ist zeitgemäß"* (Lahn-Gießen: Anabas, 1978). On the *Burgenrenaissance*, see Renate Wagner-Rieger and Walter Krause, eds., *Historismus und Schlossbau* (Munich: Prestel, 1975); Wartburg-Gesellschaft zur Erforschung von Burgen und Schlössern, ed., *Burgenrenaissance im Historismus* (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2007); Stiftung Thüringer Schlösser und Gärten, ed., *Burgen im Historismus* (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2013).



## Stolzenfels

The Koblenz city council offered the ruins of Stolzenfels Castle to Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm with the artfulness of a real estate agent: it presented the “seat of the electors of Trier, the lords of this land” as an “old knights’ castle” located in a “Romantic setting” on the “fatherland’s river.”<sup>11</sup> All the leitmotifs that would play a role in the course of the building’s reconstruction were already encapsulated in this description from 1823. But while the Romantic aspect was initially the dominant theme, the focus soon shifted to patriotism and territorial sovereignty; as it did so, the formal authority of the remains lost heft.

Early in the nineteenth century, Stolzenfels had attracted the attention of English visitors to the Rhineland, who sought the experience of being overwhelmed by the sublime impression of nature and amazed by the picturesque disorder of the ruins.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, in 1806, Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829) praised these “traces of human daring among Nature’s ruins, bold castles on wild outcrops, monuments to mankind’s heroic era clinging to those greater monuments of Nature’s heroic eras.”<sup>13</sup> The crown prince was also overawed by such impressions when, in 1815, he for the first time beheld the hills of the Middle Rhine valley covered with ruins.<sup>14</sup>

As a consequence, the aim of the rebuilding scheme presented by Schinkel in 1825 was to retain the picturesque impression made by the castle (Fig. 3.5). He planned to rebuild only a central section, situated on the eastern flank facing the Rhine, for use as living quarters. By contrast, the keep (ca. 1244), the perimeter towers, and the fourteenth-century curtain walls were to be left in a ruinous state. The imagery of transience and recollection associated with the aesthetic of ruins found expression at Stolzenfels very much as at Hohenzollern Castle, where the rebuilding of the dynasty’s ancestral seat was initially limited to the armory and chapel set at the heart of the extensive ruin.<sup>15</sup> This aesthetic culminated in the quintessential Romantic experience of

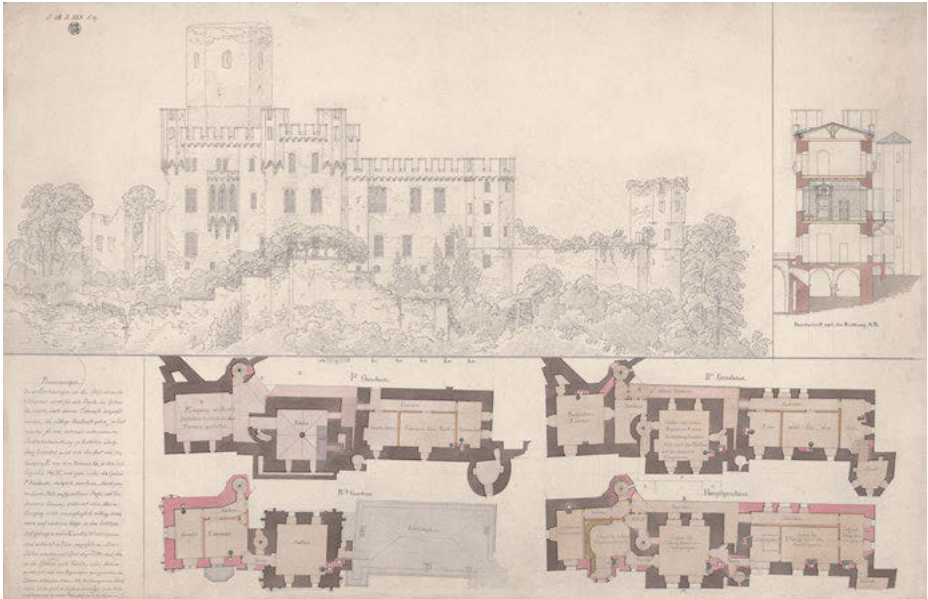
<sup>11</sup> Rathke, *Preußische Burgenromantik*, 48–49.

<sup>12</sup> Horst-Johs Tümmers, *Rheinromantik* (Cologne: Greven, 1968); Gisela Dischner, *Ursprünge der Rheinromantik in England* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1972); Jörg Heining, “Erhaben,” in *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe*, ed. Karlheinz Barck and Martin Fontius (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2000–2005), 2:275–310; Friedrich Wolfzettel, “Malerisch/pittoresk,” in Barck and Fontius, *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe*, 3:760–90.

<sup>13</sup> Friedrich Schlegel, “Briefe auf einer Reise durch die Niederlande, Rheingegenden, die Schweiz, und einen Theil von Frankreich,” in Schlegel, *Poetisches Taschenbuch für das Jahr 1806* (Berlin: Johann Friedrich Unger, 1806), 257–390, at 355.

<sup>14</sup> Rathke, *Preußische Burgenromantik*, 47–48. On Friedrich Wilhelm IV as patron, see Generaldirektion der Stiftung Preußische Schlösser und Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg, ed., *Friedrich Wilhelm IV.: Künstler und König zum 200. Geburtstag* (Frankfurt am Main: Fichter, 1995); Jörg Meiner and Jan Werquet, eds., *Friedrich Wilhelm IV. von Preußen: Politik, Kunst, Ideal* (Berlin: Lukas, 2014).

<sup>15</sup> Rolf Bothe, *Burg Hohenzollern: Von der mittelalterlichen Burg zum national-dynastischen Denkmal im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Mann, 1979), 58–66; Reinhard Zimmermann, *Künstliche Ruinen* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1989).



**Fig. 3.5:** Unknown draftsman after Karl Friedrich Schinkel, Rebuilding scheme for Stolzenfels Castle, 1825. Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Kupferstichkabinett, Inv.-Nr. SM 30.19. Photo: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett/Wolfram Büttner.

distance (cultivated especially in travel writing), with its consciousness that picturesque ruins, as embodiments of history, engender an irrevocable sense of belatedness.<sup>16</sup>

Admittedly, when the rebuilding of Stolzenfels finally started in 1836, it moved decisively away from this approach informed by Romanticism. In order to recreate the castle in its entirety, Schinkel's general plan could not simply retain the site's general outline and integrate the surviving remains of walls; instead, it had to ignore constraints arising from fragmentary discoveries and missing evidence. The architect also brushed aside the glaring inconsistencies between his creation and the visual tradition found in famous early modern topographical works; these, although they differ among themselves and exhibit improbable details, bear unanimous witness to the presence of steeply pitched roofs and spires.<sup>17</sup> In short, Schinkel expressly decided against recreating the former appearance of the castle.<sup>18</sup> This is because his concept for the rebuilding

<sup>16</sup> Friederich Wolfzettel, *Ce désir de vagabondage cosmopolite: Wege und Entwicklung des französischen Reiseberichts im 19. Jahrhunderte* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1986).

<sup>17</sup> Daniel Meisner, *Thesaurus philo-politicus* (Frankfurt am Main: Eberhard Kieser, 1630), 2, pt. 4, pl. 8; Matthäus Merian, *Topographia Archiepiscopatum Moguntinensis, Trevirensis, et Coloniensis* (Frankfurt am Main: Matthäus Merian, 1646), plate after 24.

<sup>18</sup> Eva Brües, *Karl Friedrich Schinkel Lebenswerk, 12: Die Rheinlande* (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1968), 128–49, at 128.

was rooted in the English Castle Gothic, of which Strawberry Hill—the country residence, at Twickenham near London, of Horace Walpole (1717–97)—constituted the paradigmatic example.<sup>19</sup> In 1833, Schinkel had begun work on Babelsberg Castle in Potsdam, a summer residence for Prince Wilhelm of Prussia (1797–1888), later the first emperor of the German Empire. Wilhelm and his wife, Augusta, wanted the impressions of Castle Gothic they had derived from Humphry Repton's illustrated *Fragments* (1816) translated into reality.<sup>20</sup>

The driving imperative at Stolzenfels was to create a residential edifice that was as imposing as it was functional. Located in the immediate vicinity of the governmental and administrative institutions of the provincial capital, Koblenz, the site asserted territorial sovereignty.<sup>21</sup> Here, on the western border with France, it was important—in the words of Philipp von Wussow, general chief of staff in Koblenz and later captain of the castle—to give unambiguous expression to “Prussia’s power and rule on the banks of the Rhine” and thereby to persuade the “inhabitants of the Rhineland” to strive for “the welfare and preservation of king and country.”<sup>22</sup> Doubts about the inhabitants’ unqualified loyalty to Prussia, which had only recently come to rule the territory, were justified given the legal and administrative achievements of the French during the two previous decades when they were the occupying power. As a result, it was frequently necessary to remind Rhenish inhabitants that this “hereditary enemy” had destroyed more than Stolzenfels.<sup>23</sup>

This geopolitical arena of conflict became more volatile with Friedrich Wilhelm’s accession to the Prussian throne in June 1840 and, especially, with the eruption of the Rhine crisis in August of that same year.<sup>24</sup> Later, in the ideologically overheated atmosphere of the years after the founding of the empire in 1871, the “French hordes” returned as a leitmotif because it was said that they had caused devastation along the Rhine, including at Stolzenfels, before Emperor Wilhelm had created “an imperial palace newly arisen from debris and rubble.”<sup>25</sup> In the nexus of territorial and political

19 See most recently Michael Snodin, ed., *Horace Walpole’s Strawberry Hill* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

20 Humphry Repton, *Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening: Including Some Remarks on Grecian and Gothic Architecture* (London: J. Taylor, 1816), 19–20, 33–39; Johannes Sievers, *Die Arbeiten von K. F. Schinkel für Prinz Wilhelm, späteren König von Preußen* (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1955), 157–218.

21 Manfred Koltes, *Das Rheinland zwischen Frankreich und Preußen* (Cologne, 1992); Jürgen Herres and Bärbel Holtz, “Rheinland und Westfalen als preußische Provinzen,” in *Rheinland, Westfalen und Preußen*, ed. Georg Mölich, Veit Veltzke, and Bernd Walter (Münster: Aschendorff, 2011), 113–208.

22 1836 letter to Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm cited in Rathke, *Preußische Burgenromantik*, 113.

23 Heinrich Müller Malten, *Schloß Stolzenfels am Rheine* (Frankfurt am Main: Heinrich Ludwig Bröner, 1844), 33.

24 Irmeline Veit-Brause, “Die deutsch-französische Krise von 1840” (PhD diss., University of Cologne, 1967).

25 Alexander Duncker, *Die ländlichen Wohnsitze, Schlösser und Residenzen der Ritterschaftlichen Grundbesitzer in der Preußischen Monarchie* (Berlin: Duncker, 1871–73), 12: no. 685.

concerns that arose from the new European order established by the Congress of Vienna in 1815, Stolzenfels Castle was from the start inextricably linked to the idea of a Prussian protective wall along the Rhine.

Stolzenfels had a counterpart along the eastern borders of the kingdom: Marienburg (now Malbork), the former main seat of the Teutonic Order near Danzig. The process of recreating this castle had begun as far back as 1817.<sup>26</sup> Marienburg, however, was not perceived merely as a geographically complementary border stronghold; it was first and foremost a national historical landmark—a reminder that the Order's territory was part of the Prussian heartland in the east. If Prussia's foundation myth had revolved around Marienburg and Hohenzollern Castle (the dynasty's ancestral seat on the northern edge of the Swabian Alb), that myth was now intended to embrace the Rhineland and Stolzenfels as well.<sup>27</sup> But on the Rhine this narrative was a classic case of the "invention of tradition."<sup>28</sup> There had been no Prussian rule there before 1815, nor had the territory existed as a homogeneous entity (it consisted rather of four electorates, nine dukedoms, three principalities, the lands of numerous counts and lords, not to mention abbeys, convents, and imperial cities). Unlike the dominions of the Teutonic Order, no overarching political or administrative structures were in place to assert the idea of a continuing local tradition. As a result, Friedrich Wilhelm IV's project to forge German national unity under Prussian leadership could only function through a symbolic politics that took on the "cloak of the idealistically glorified medieval imperial federation."<sup>29</sup>

In the decor of Stolzenfels Castle, this historical imagination manifested itself in multiple ways, starting with its emphasis on ancestry and kinship.<sup>30</sup> In the stained-glass windows of the Knights' Great Hall, for example, the castle's original patrons, from the electorate of Trier, were represented alongside those from the Hohenzollern dynasty. To illustrate the paradigmatic virtues of both rulers and knights in the fresco cycle of the Small Hall, the painter Hermann Stilke included not only Staufen emperors and other rulers from the Holy Roman Empire, but also John of Luxembourg (1296–1346). This king of Bohemia was the nephew of Baldwin, the archbishop-elect of Trier who helped build the castle, as well as a forebear of both Friedrich Wilhelm IV and his wife, Elisabeth Ludovika of Bavaria (1801–73). The royal election in 1400 of Rupert III of the

26 Hartmut Boockmann, *Die Marienburg im 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main: Propyläen, 1982); Christofer Herrmann, "Die Wiederentdeckung und 'In-Dienst-Stellung' der Marienburg," *Preußenland* 9 (2018): 122–48.

27 Catharina Hasenclever, *Gotisches Mittelalter und Gottesgnadentum in den Zeichnungen Friedrich Wilhelms IV* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2005), 140–67.

28 Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

29 Frank-Lothar Kroll, *Friedrich Wilhelm IV. und das Staatsdenken der deutschen Romantik* (Berlin: Colloquium, 1990), 124. On medievalizing conceptions of rulership, see also Hasenclever, *Gotisches Mittelalter*, 118–83.

30 Rathke, *Preußische Burgenromantik*, 94–102; Werquet, *Historismus und Repräsentation*, 373–85.

Palatinate that took place in nearby Rhens was recalled in a monumental history painting on the palace facade facing the Rhine commissioned from August Gustav Lasinsky (1811–70). It also highlighted Rupert's brother-in-law, Frederick I of Brandenburg (1371–1440), who later became the first prince-elector from the Hohenzollern house and likewise counted as one of Friedrich Wilhelm's ancestors. When he received the castle, the crown prince had therefore taken possession of a multifaceted site with links to both imperial history and his own family's history.

The fiction of a unified territory with deep historical roots was certainly made manifest by the building itself. Importantly, this did not occur through meanings ascribed to its form. Castle Gothic, atypical for the area, referred only very generically to a legitimist understanding of the Middle Ages and its prerevolutionary traditions of rulership. The construction of an all-embracing, continuous local tradition of territorial lordship instead rested with the building's structural arrangement and the forms of control it enabled. By means of deliberately constructed vistas and sightlines, the castle complex was woven as closely as possible into the Middle Rhine's natural landscape and the *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory) on the valley's ruin-scattered hills. Monuments that Schlegel lauded as representing natural and human "heroic times" were integrated into the building complex. One sees their presence in the park conceived by Peter Joseph Lenné (1789–1866) as an English landscape garden; in the extensive gardens and terraces laid out within the defensive-wall circuit;<sup>31</sup> and in individual elements of the building, such as the arcaded hall, the pergola garden, the chapel, and even the glazing of the windows.<sup>32</sup>

Through the arcaded hall, realized by Stüler according to the patron's specifications, the gaze travels downward from the castle courtyard to the pergola garden, from where aptly positioned window openings lead it further down toward the river and the provincial capital, Koblenz. The chapel, added between 1843 and 1847 during the final building phase, serves also as a stage for this architectonic *mise-en-scène* of the gaze (Fig. 3.6). Set in front of the sweeping terrace overlooking the Rhine, the chapel stands out thanks to the high contrast between the light-colored tufa and the dark basaltic lava. The heightened visibility of the sacred part of the castle refers to the power that the Hohenzollern family claimed *gratia Dei* (by the grace of God). Finally, the roof of the chapel, crowned with crenellations, offers a viewing platform onto a landscape panorama divided into discrete, picture-like portions by the small, slender pinnacles. Contemporary guides similarly described the views from the arched window openings in the chapel towers as a sequence of "paintings." Framed in stone, the views combined "the charms of nature" with "historical reminiscences."<sup>33</sup> This is very close to Schlegel, who perceived the Rhine landscape as "a self-contained painting and premeditated

31 Generaldirektion Kulturelles Erbe Rheinland-Pfalz, *Stolzenfels*, 180–279.

32 Claudia Schumacher and Ivo Rauch, "Inszenierte Ausblicke—preziös gerahmt," in *Le vitrail dans la demeure des origines à nos jours*, ed. Karine Boulanger (Ghent: Snoeck, 2018), 184–201.

33 Malten, *Schloß Stolzenfels*, 94.



**Fig. 3.6:** Koblenz, Stolzenfels Castle from the south. Photo: Dominik Ketz. Reproduced by kind permission of Dominik Ketz.

work of art” featuring “sublime scenery adorned with the bold remains of old castles standing proud on hillsides.”<sup>34</sup> The diorama entitled *The Royal Castle of Stolzenfels and Its Surroundings* that opened in Cologne in 1843 would eventually enshrine this pictorially organized perception.<sup>35</sup>

For the castle’s occupants, this astutely calculated scenery conjured historical monuments belonging to a vast memory landscape, even if numerous *lieux de mémoire* had only lately gained significance, partly through the work of restoration.<sup>36</sup> The Königsstuhl (King’s Seat) at Rhens, a significant site in the empire’s history, had been rebuilt between 1841 and 1843 with Prussian support in just the form in which it appears in Lasinsky’s fresco on the facade of Stolzenfels. And the hermitage at Kastel on the River Saar, although not immediately visible from the castle, had been converted a few

<sup>34</sup> Schlegel, “Briefe,” 350, 353.

<sup>35</sup> Werner Neite, “Das Diorama in Köln,” *Jahrbuch des Kölnischen Geschichtsvereins* 48 (1977): 199–217.

<sup>36</sup> Landesamt für Denkmalpflege Rheinland-Pfalz, ed., *Preußische Facetten* (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2001); Alexander Thon and Johannes Erichsen, *Der Königsstuhl bei Rhens* (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2015); Eduard Sebald, “Die Memoria für Johann den Blinden,” *Die Gartenkunst* 32 (2020): 395–408.

years earlier, after plans drawn by Schinkel, into a mortuary chapel for the remains of the crown prince's royal ancestor John of Luxembourg.

To sum up: one can say that the constitutive factor for conceptualizing a polycentric historical landscape was not so much the castle at Stolzenfels itself as the views it afforded onto the surroundings. This experience was not only permanently built into the castle's structure but also performatively staged when needed. Thus, at the castle's inauguration in 1842 and also three years later during a visit by Queen Victoria, the monuments of the panorama of the Rhine—from the fortress of Ehrenbreitstein in the north to the King's Seat at Rhens and the Marksburg at Braubach in the south—were lit up at night with fireworks.<sup>37</sup> Contemporary courtly self-representation and glimpses into the past were put in a reciprocal relationship designed to bring before the viewer's eyes the tradition of sovereignty that was claimed for this site.

## Haut-Koenigsbourg

While Stolzenfels Castle constituted the focal point of a multipartite landscape of memory, Haut-Koenigsbourg was conceived in isolation as a landmark visible from far and wide in the heart of the imperial territory of Alsace-Lorraine. Wilhelm II received the ruins of this structure—with its high castle dating back to the Staufeu period and its outer wards and bastions built around 1500—as a gift in 1899 from the city of Sélestat (Fig. 3.7).



**Fig. 3.7:** Bodo Ebhardt, Haut-Koenigsbourg before reconstruction, 1908. Photo from Bodo Ebhardt, *Die Hohkönigsburg im Elsaß* (Berlin: Wasmuth, 1908), fig. 35.

The following year, he decided to have it rebuilt with the help of the architect Bodo Ebhardt. According to a journal founded by Ebhardt and published by the German Castle Association, an “ivy-clad idyll” and “tranquil castle ruin” was thus transformed

<sup>37</sup> Malten, *Schloß Stolzenfels*, 35; Robert Dohme, *Beschreibung der Burg Stolzenfels* (Berlin: Carl Kühn, 1850), 95–98, 99–104.

into an “imperial palace.” Completed in 1908, Haut-Koenigsbourg was now filled with Hohenzollern life after having been inhabited by the Hohenstaufen and Hapsburg dynasties. As “an emblem of the German emperor’s sovereignty in the Western March,” it should be regarded “like Marienburg in the Eastern March: as a symbol of German power.”<sup>38</sup> At the building’s solemn inauguration, Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg, state secretary of the interior and later imperial chancellor, even more decisively encapsulated this historical sentiment, saying that an emblem of “the power of the Hohenstaufen emperors” had come back to life.<sup>39</sup>

Such meanings can hardly be inferred from the building’s form. Ebhardt produced a perfected version of a late medieval castle (see Fig. 3.3), but one that differed both overall and in detail from the neo-Romanesque imperial style favored by the Hohenzollerns. Buildings that corresponded much better to the ideal model of an imperial palace of the early or High Middle Ages were taking shape elsewhere. After the foundation of the German Empire in 1871, the first such palace intended to demonstrate a link with the medieval imperial tradition was at Goslar. Completed in 1879, the extensive transformation of the architectural leftovers from the Salian and Staufer eras was undertaken to stage, pointedly, the new imperial power of the Hohenzol-



**Fig. 3.8:** Postcard showing castle residence at Poznan, 1910. Private collection. Photo: Author.

<sup>38</sup> “Die wiedererstandene Hohkönigsburg,” *Der Burgwart* 9 (1908): 73–74.

<sup>39</sup> “Der Kaiser auf der Hohkönigsburg,” *Der Burgwart* 9 (1908): 105–112, at 108.



lern family.<sup>40</sup> To that end, the preferred formal language was for the most part a generalized High Romanesque. The only concrete historical reference, to the galleries of the Palatine Chapel built by Charlemagne (ca. 747/748–814) at Aachen, appears in the fenestration of the avant-corps of the central portion of this imperial residence. Inside, opposite the monumental window, a wall painting by Hermann Wislicenus (1825–99) presents an apotheosis of the foundation of the German Empire aggrandized with allegories, including an image of Emperor Wilhelm I receiving homage from personifications of Alsace and Lorraine.<sup>41</sup>

The castle residence at Poznan (present-day Poland) was conceived in its entirety as the monumental expression of a historical claim to sovereignty (Fig. 3.8).<sup>42</sup> Erected between 1905 and 1910 by the architect Franz Schwechten (1841–1924), this building, located in what was then a Prussian province, was on the front line of the ongoing conflict between Poland and Germany. It was intended as an unmistakable symbol of the continuity between the Hohenzollern rulers, who had only very recently acceded to the imperial dignity, and various dynasties that had ruled since Charlemagne. Embodying an aggressive and repressive Germanization policy, the extensive complex can be seen as the architectural equivalent of a threatening gesture. Contemporaries described it as an “emblem of the power of Germanness,”<sup>43</sup> equal to the “proud remains of old imperial palaces that proclaim, for today’s generation, the exalted hymn to the power and greatness of the Holy German Empire of the Middle Ages.”<sup>44</sup>

To emphasize the semantics of power and greatness with an architectural style that could count as truly national, Schwechten chose the formal vocabulary of the Romanesque. Inside, he fused it into a hybrid by combining it with two more artistic expressions; one conveyed an ancient northern ideology of the Germanic peoples while the other, couched in a Byzantine manner, expressed the divine right to rulership. On the outside, by contrast, the castle appeared as a modern residential building cloaked in pure pastiches of the Romanesque style: ashlar masonry (some of it hammer-dressed), fenestration borrowed from the Palatine Chapel at Aachen (as at Goslar), oculi in the chapel apse, and dwarf galleries (for example, on the rotunda that crowns the corner tower). The purpose of these motifs was to endow this castle-like ensemble

<sup>40</sup> Ludger Kerksen, *Das Interesse am Mittelalter im deutschen Nationaldenkmal* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1975), 105–111; Monika Arndt, *Die Goslarer Kaiserpfalz als Nationaldenkmal* (Hildesheim: Lax, 1976); Godehard Hoffmann, *Architektur für die Nation? Der Reichstag und die Staatsbauten des Deutschen Kaiserreichs 1871–1918* (Cologne: DuMont, 2000), 15–20.

<sup>41</sup> Monika Arndt, “Der Weißbart auf des Rotbarts Throne”: *Mittelalterliches und Preußisches Kaisertum in den Wandbildern des Goslarer Kaiserhauses* (Göttingen: Goltze, 1977).

<sup>42</sup> Hoffmann, *Architektur für die Nation*, 233–38; Stefanie Lieb, *Der Rezeptionsprozeß in der neuromanischen Architektur* (Cologne: Kunsthistorisches Institut der Universität, 2005), 168–95.

<sup>43</sup> Friedrich Schultze, “Das neue Residenzschloß in Posen,” *Zentralblatt der Bauverwaltung* 30 (1910): 453–458, at 453.

<sup>44</sup> Georg Voss, *Die Kaiserpfalz in Posen. Die Schloßkapelle* (Poznan: Ostdeutsche Buchdruckerei und Verlagsanstalt, 1913), 7.

with marks of dignity borrowed from religious buildings such as the imperial cathedrals of Worms and Speyer.

One might observe that this “neo-Staufen” style was also deemed appropriate for transportation-related structures in politically or militarily sensitive locations (the train station in Metz and the Hohenzollern Bridge in Cologne) and for administrative buildings (the royal government building in Koblenz).<sup>45</sup> Everywhere, it materialized the idea of sovereignty and political genealogy, but nowhere was that intent more memorably expressed than in the monument to Emperor Wilhelm I constructed in the Kyffhäuser hills in Thuringia between 1890 and 1897 after plans drawn by Bruno Schmitz.<sup>46</sup> There, above the huddled figure of Frederick Barbarossa (ca. 1122–90) sculpted into the rock at the monument’s base, Wilhelm rises high on his steed as the fulfillment of the promise made in the Kyffhäuser legend that the imperial power would one day be reinvigorated. The Hohenzollern here have truly become the heirs of the Hohenstaufen.<sup>47</sup>

At Haut-Koenigsbourg, one looks in vain for historical reminiscences of this nature. In particular, propagandistic claims about “the power of the Hohenstaufen emperors” were not asserted architecturally. Precisely in the places where the largely unaltered Staufen-era masonry could be seen and touched—notably at the foot of the keep in the inner courtyard of the main castle—Ebhardt blocked the view with a late Gothic stair tower known as the *Große Schnecke* (“large snail”). This is because he had something else in mind: a recreation based on the state of the building as it was after its destruction in 1462 and the comprehensive reconstruction undertaken by the Counts of Thierstein from 1479 onwards. It was not the old Hohenstaufen-era configuration but this more recent layer that became the focus for Ebhardt’s historical and architectural imagination.

In his dealings with the on-site evidence and the written sources, Ebhardt was shaped by the fundamental principles of historicism as developed in the academic discipline of history.<sup>48</sup> His faith in historicism explains why he circumvented Wilhelmine

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45 Martin Stather, *Die Kunstpolitik Wilhelms II.* (Constance: Hartung-Gorre, 1994). For Alsace in particular, see Klaus Nohlen, *Baupolitik im Reichsland Elsaß-Lothringen 1871–1918* (Berlin: Mann, 1982); Niels Wilcken, *Architektur im Grenzraum* (Saarbrücken: Institut für Landeskunde im Saarland, 2000). The term *Neostaufer* is borrowed from Georg Gölter, “Rheinland-Pfalz und seine preußische Vergangenheit,” *Jahrbuch für westdeutsche Landesgeschichte* 10 (1984): 367–79, at 376.

46 Kerssen, *Das Interesse am Mittelalter*, 97–105; Gunther Mai, ed., *Das Kyffhäuser-Denkmal 1896–1996* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1997); Camilla G. Kaul, *Friedrich Barbarossa im Kyffhäuser* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2007); Herfried Münkler, *Die Deutschen und ihre Mythen* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 2009), 36–68.

47 Heinz Gollwitzer, “Zur Auffassung der mittelalterlichen Kaiserpolitik im 19. Jahrhundert,” in *Dauer und Wandel der Geschichte*, ed. Rudolf Vierhaus and Manfred Botzenhart (Münster: Aschendorff, 1966), 483–512; Elisabeth Fehrenbach, *Wandlungen des deutschen Kaisergedankens 1871–1918* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1969).

48 Otto Gerhard Oexle, *Geschichtswissenschaft im Zeichen des Historismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996); Fischer, *Bodo Ebhardt*, 176–77, 222–27.

propaganda aims with his concept for the rebuilding of Haut-Koenigsbourg. Ebhardt was faithful to the historiographical paradigm formulated by Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886), to say or to show “how it essentially was.”<sup>49</sup> He was of the firm conviction that the ideal of historical objectivity could be reached by applying rigorous methods of source critique; an absent past could be inferred from its surviving remains and then visualized through reconstruction. With such an idealistic conception of history, it was possible to overcome the concepts of belatedness and unrepeatability that had been central to the historical thinking of the Romantic era and that had determined Schinkel’s rebuilding scheme for Stolzenfels (see Fig. 3.5). Physical remains and written records were now of unimpeachable epistemological authority. The largely arbitrary transformation of ruins—perhaps employing the formal language of Castle Gothic as at Stolzenfels—was no longer possible. If the recreation of Haut-Koenigsbourg focused on its late medieval state of around 1500, this was because the evidence did not permit a complete reconstruction that reached further back in time. In particular, the original, Hohenstaufen-era edifice eluded Ebhardt’s methodologically disciplined grasp. Despite the Wilhelmine interest in the Staufens, Ebhardt chose not to highlight the original structure in his architectural work at Haut-Koenigsbourg. Indeed, he actively masked the high medieval remains. Historicism and its principles thus help to explain how buildings as diverse in appearance as the castles at Poznan and Haut-Koenigsbourg could both emerge from similar political and ideological assumptions.

Although Ebhardt’s words employed the full range of the German empire’s ideology (he called Haut-Koenigsbourg the “emblem of the new German Reich” and a “symbol of occupation visible far and wide” across Alsace-Lorraine),<sup>50</sup> his architectural work at the castle deliberately overlooked the semantic possibilities of the neo-Romanesque style (which was ubiquitous, especially in Alsace) and the Hohenstaufen ideology that undergirded it.<sup>51</sup> Instead, he retreated to an imagined Germany of the time of Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) that corresponded much better to the widespread conception of an ideal medieval castle.<sup>52</sup> In the case of Haut-Koenigsbourg, this could only be achieved by a reconstruction that aimed to match this ideal type. This meant filling physical lacunae (and gaps in the historical record) through analogy and ex-

49 “To say how it essentially was” (*sagen, wie es eigentlich gewesen*) appears in the first edition of Leopold Ranke, *Geschichten der romanischen und germanischen Völker* (Leipzig: Reimer, 1824), 1:6; “to show” (*zeigen*) is used in the second edition (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1874), 1:7.

50 Bodo Ebhardt, *Die Hohkönigsburg im Elsaß* (Berlin: Wasmuth, 1908), 52; Ebhardt, *Denkschrift über die Wiederherstellung der Hohkönigsburg* (Berlin: Ernst, 1900), 6.

51 Jürgen Dendorfer, “Die Staufer im Elsass,” in *Nationales Interesse und ideologischer Missbrauch*, ed. Martina Backes and Jürgen Dendorfer (Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2019), 155–79.

52 For the imagined idea of Germany in the age of Dürer, see Norbert Götz, *Um Neugotik und Nürnberger Stil* (Nuremberg: Verein für Geschichte der Stadt, 1981); Sigrun Brunsiek, *Auf dem Weg der alten Kunst* (Marburg: Jonas, 1994). For the ideal of the medieval castle, see Heiko Laß, ed., *Mythos, Metapher, Motiv* (Alfeld an der Leine: Coppi, 2002); G. Ulrich Großmann, ed., *Mythos Burg* (Dresden: Sandstein, 2010).

trapolations from surviving buildings as well as removing more recent historical alterations to bring the monument in line with what was supposed to be the spirit of the era of its original construction. Supported by the epistemological optimism of nineteenth-century historicism, Ebhardt followed the principles articulated by Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc (1814–79)—that most influential scholar and preservationist of medieval buildings—in constructing at Haut-Koenigsbourg a stylistically pure, ideal image of late medieval castle architecture.<sup>53</sup>

## Trifels

As at Stolzenfels, the rebuilding of the castle of Trifels also abandoned any empirical evidence and adopted instead the path of a political construction of meaning. Here it would have been possible for decisions concerning the former appearance of the castle to be placed on a new footing as a result of archaeological excavations that took place between 1935 and 1938 (Fig. 3.9).<sup>54</sup> But as soon as the planning came under the influence of National Socialist ideology, the project became focused on a conception of imperial sovereignty that was rooted in the Staufen era.

In 1936, the governor of Bavaria, Ludwig Siebert, said in a speech given in Annweiler that the “great past” of the First Reich should be correlated with “the vigor of the Third Reich” and the “collapse of Hohenstaufen power” connected with Hitler’s “reestablishment of Germany.”<sup>55</sup> Bodo Ebhardt cited these passages in his report on the reconstruction of Trifels and in his monograph on the castle’s architecture. Friedrich Sprater (1884–1952), the lead excavator and director of the Historical Museum of the Palatinate in Speyer, formulated the same historical relationship as follows: “A great monument of the First Reich will thus receive the recognition that it has long deserved under the Third.”<sup>56</sup> Such ideological expectations placed demands

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53 Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, “Restauration,” in *Dictionnaire raisonné de l’architecture* (Paris: Morel, 1866), 8:14–34, at 14: “To restore a building is not to preserve it, to repair, or to rebuild it; it is to reinstate it in a condition of completeness which may never have existed at any given time.” Cited from M.F. Hearn, ed., *The Architectural Theory of Viollet-le-Duc: Readings and Commentary* (Cambridge: MIT University Press, 1990), 269.

54 In the nineteenth century, ideas about how Trifels had looked vacillated between the neo-Romanesque and the “Germany of yore;” see Bernd Carqué, “Zwischen Romantik und Reichsherrlichkeit,” in *800 Jahre Stadt Annweiler*, ed. Jan Keupp, Sabine Klapp, and Jörg Peltzer (Ubstadt-Weiher: Verlag Regionalkultur, 2021), 189–239, at 202–5, 207–8. On the excavation in the 1930s, see Meyer, *Burg Trifels*, 153–263.

55 Stein, “Trifels und Hohkönigsburg,” 387–88; Bodo Ebhardt, *Burg Trifels* (Braubach: Burgverlag, 1938), 7, 44.

56 Friedrich Sprater, “Der Trifels,” *Germanen-Erbe* 2 (1937): 178–86, at 186.

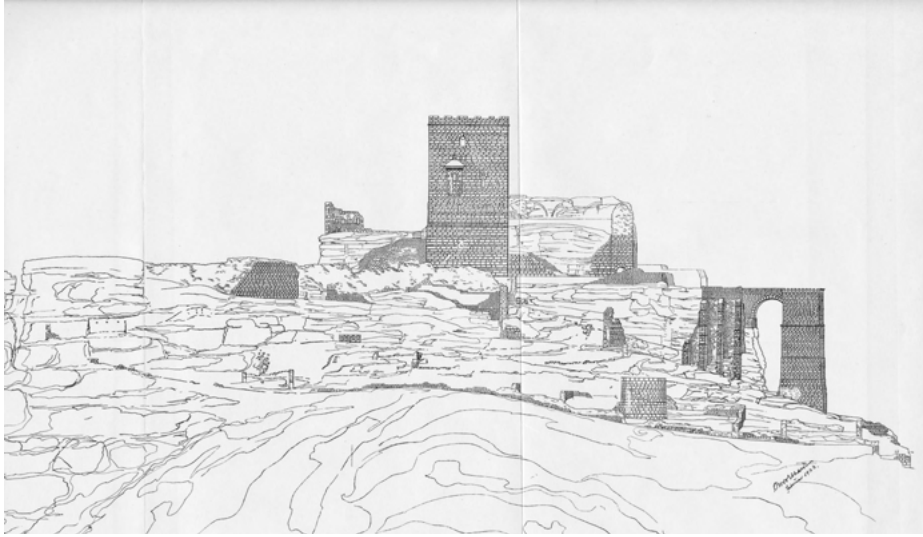


Fig. 3.9: Bodo Ebhardt, Trifels Castle before reconstruction, 1938. Photo from Ebhardt, *Burg Trifels*, pl. 8.

on the reconstruction of the ruin and caused difficulties that Ebhardt, the evaluating architect, considered to be barely surmountable.<sup>57</sup> The surviving remains were so few that his belief in showing how it essentially was (in Ranke's sense) was impossible. Furthermore (unlike at Haut-Koenigsbourg), there also was a lack of written and visual sources.

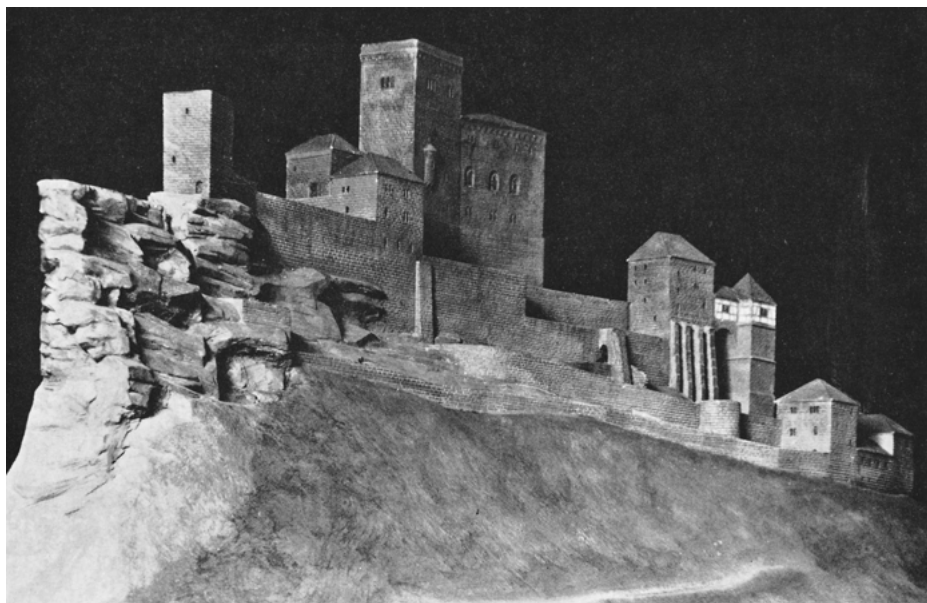
These constraints left the architect Rudolf Esterer undeterred. In 1937, he took on responsibility for reconstructing Trifels, a project financed partly out of Hitler's personal pocket. Esterer's design did not emerge from a reconstruction process based on the critical investigation of sources or an architectural analysis; instead, it was an act of what has been termed creative preservation (*schöpferische Denkmalpflege*). He described this approach as "discerning the soul of a building and awakening it to new life." That could be accomplished by establishing an "inner connection with the way our forebears led their lives," to which the present was closely affiliated through the axiom of "spirit (*Geist*) from their spirit" and "blood from their blood."<sup>58</sup>

At Trifels, Esterer gave architectural expression to this ideology of century-bridging "inner connections" by planning a so-called *Weiheraum* (Hall of Honor) for the main tower. Soaring above the still-extant old imperial chapel, it would make "the visitor aware of the immortality of German power and the German will to live by

57 Stein, "Trifels und Hohkönigsburg," 391; Ebhardt, *Burg Trifels*, 44.

58 Rudolf Esterer, "Wiederinstandsetzung geschichtlicher Baudenkmäler," in *Wiedererstandene Baudenkmale*, ed. Ludwig Siebert (Munich: Bruckmann, 1941), 19–29, at 19–20.

grounding the new Reich in the blood and soil of the old empire.”<sup>59</sup> This idea of an eternal and, at the same time, self-renewing Reich made Esterer abandon not only the concepts of historical belatedness and unrepeatability that were central to the Romantic consciousness but also the historicist approach based on the careful evaluation of sources. In short, Esterer dispensed with the conceptualizations of history that had guided Schinkel and Ebbardt. His understanding of history, based on empathy and timelessness, helped to give the cultural ideology of National Socialism a built form that was in line with the principles for architectural representation that, as will be discussed next, were promulgated by the so-called Thousand-Year Reich.



**Fig. 3.10:** Architectural model of Rudolf Esterer's reconstruction of Trifels Castle, 1939. Photo from Stein, "Trifels und Hohenkönigsburg," fig. 5.

Esterer's design served as a guide for the rebuilding that was carried out, with interruptions, between 1938 and 1966. We know it mainly in the form of an architectural model created in 1939 while the plans for reconstruction, which are now mostly lost, were being worked out (Fig. 3.10).<sup>60</sup> The building's general outline and its formal language were unmistakably determined by historical borrowings in combination with modern design principles derived from the Neues Bauen (New Building) movement of

<sup>59</sup> Rudolf Esterer, "Gedanken zum Trifelsausbau" (undated draft), quoted from Fleischner, "*Schöpferische Denkmalpflege*," 95.

<sup>60</sup> Fleischner, "*Schöpferische Denkmalpflege*," 56, 66, and figs. 37, 45–48.

the 1920s and 1930s. The High Romanesque vocabulary of rusticated stonework, twin-lancet windows, and rounded and toothed friezes forms a hybrid with the building's spatial configuration and the lines of its walls, which are crowned with modest hipped or tented roofs lacking machicolations or crenellations. From a morphological point of view, the elaborate comparisons that architectural historians have made with supposedly Hohenstaufen architectural models found in southern Italian fortresses and fortifications are misleading,<sup>61</sup> since what viewers saw in the second quarter of the twentieth century (when the Italian structures had not yet been restored) was defensive work consisting of machicolations and crenellations.<sup>62</sup> None of these Italian buildings evince a particular affinity with Trifels in either the treatment of masonry or the architectural decoration.<sup>63</sup>

The formal architectural language adopted at Trifels under Esterer's influence also informed other building projects sponsored by the National Socialists.<sup>64</sup> The design philosophies employed for two types of Nazi-era castles are of particular interest. One is the so-called *Ordensburgen* (Order castles). In the Middle Ages, these were associated with military orders, but under the Nazis they were designed as training centers for the future leadership elite of the Party. The other philosophy of design was used for the *Totenburgen* (Castles of the Dead) built at the behest of the German War Graves' Commission (Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge) on World War I battlefields. As funerary monuments and sites of honor, these *Totenburgen* were conceived from the start as symbols. The Nazi *Ordensburgen*, on the other hand, needed to accommodate multiple uses. This placed stricter limitations on the buildings' formal and semantic possibilities, which usually affected only specific sections.

Take Ordensburg Vogelsang, conceived as a training facility for the Third Reich after plans by Clemens Klotz (1886–1969) (Fig. 3.11). A spread-out castle complex, set on a ridge in the Eifel mountains, it culminated in a sequence of structures made up of the community hall and an end tower.<sup>65</sup> It is primarily in this part of the complex, staged to be a landmark visible from a great distance, that it becomes clear how Klotz interpreted the historical typology of castles in terms of the Neues Bauen. Essentially, he reduced the traditional parts of a medieval castle—the hall and the keep—to elementary geometric volumes, expressing their defensive purpose through massive monumentality rather than by adding typical defensive elements. As at Trifels, the language of modernism manifested itself in the Eifel mountains in an idiosyncratic

61 Stein, "Trifels und Hohkönigsburg," 395–97, 399–403.

62 Arthur Haseloff, *Die Bauten der Hohenstaufen in Unteritalien* (Leipzig: Hiersemann, 1920).

63 Thomas Biller, *Die Burgen Kaiser Friedrichs II. in Süditalien* (Darmstadt: wbg Theiss, 2021), 164–73.

64 Frank Pütz, "Die Burg im Nationalsozialismus," in Laß, *Mythos, Metapher, Motiv*, 43–66; Link, *Burgen und Burgenforschung*, 47–80.

65 Ruth Schmitz-Ehmke and Monika Herzog, *Die ehemalige Ordensburg Vogelsang*, 4th ed. (Worms: Werner, 2010). For the wider context, see David H. Haney, *Architecture and the Nazi Cultural Landscape* (New York: Routledge, 2023), 197–264.

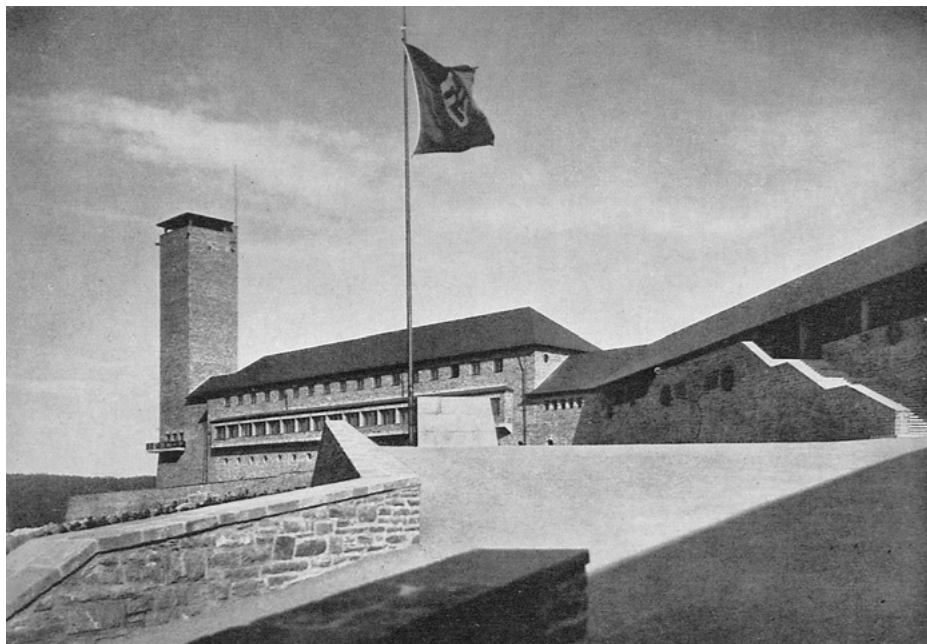


Fig. 3.11: Vogelsang, Ordnensburg, 1937. Photo from *Die Kunst für alle* 52 (1936–37), 165.

combination with the conservative style associated with the *Heimatschutz* (preservation of the homeland) movement.<sup>66</sup> Its influence explains the presence of materials typical of the region, such as the graywacke (a coarse dark sandstone) used for the rubble stonework and the slate cladding of the roof.

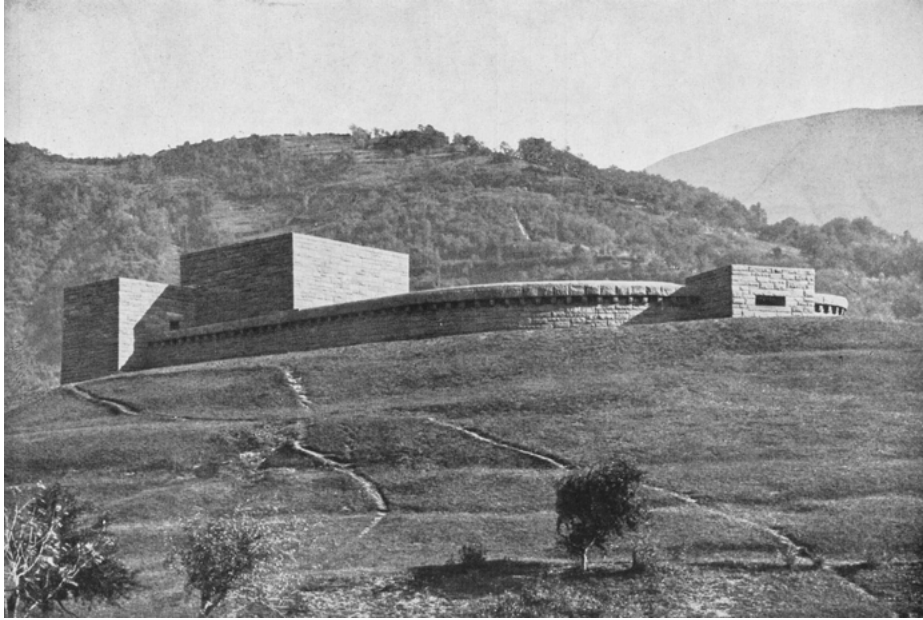
With the *Totenburgen*, Robert Tischler (1885–1959), the leading architect of the War Graves' Commission, developed a novel type of monument to honor the fallen soldiers. Though these “castles of the dead” served as funerary monuments and sites of memory, they register above all as monumental self-projections of the present.<sup>67</sup> The Tannenberg Memorial in East Prussia, designed by Walter and Johannes Krüger and built in the years 1924–27, provided an antecedent with its monumental walled octagon sur-

<sup>66</sup> Dieter Bartetzko, *Illusionen in Stein* (Berlin: Zentralverlag, 2012), 229–56 also noted the influence of modernism at Trifels. On the *Heimatschutz* movement, see Winfried Speitkamp, “Denkmalpflege und Heimatschutz,” *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 70 (1988): 149–93; Raphael Rosenberg, “Architekturen des ‘Dritten Reiches,’” in *Die Politik in der Kunst und die Kunst in der Politik*, ed. Ariane Hellingner, Barbara Waldkirch, and Elisabeth Buchner (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2013), 57–86.

<sup>67</sup> Gunnar Brands, “From World War I Cemeteries to the Nazi ‘Fortresses of the Dead,’” in *Places of Commemoration*, ed. Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 2001), 215–56; Bernd Ulrich et al., *Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge* (Berlin: be.bra wissenschaft verlag, 2019), 145–72, 228–63.



mounted by defensive towers.<sup>68</sup> Tischler pushed the process of reduction to elemental forms and materials to its extreme in works such as the *Totenburg* at Quero (1926–39) built on the Col Maor above the Piave Valley in the Veneto region (Fig. 3.12).



**Fig. 3.12:** Quero, *Totenburg*, 1939. Photo from Gerdy Troost, ed., *Das Bauen im Neuen Reich* (Bayreuth: Gauverlag, 1938–43), 2:24.

Here he reduced the design to three basic elements—tower, ring wall, and bastion—each built out of rusticated ashlars as a series of compact blocks. Historicizing references are limited to the abstracted adaptation of individual motifs, such as the console moldings. Quero’s commanding presence was achieved with the creative vocabulary of the *Neues Bauen*, whose archaizing monumental characteristics deliberately avoided specific historical references. Geopolitically, the *Totenburgen* were intended to mark the coming Germanic empire; their elementary formal language, with its supposed timelessness, helped to express the National Socialists’ claim to eternal rule.

Trifels was similarly intended to function as an everlasting demonstration of power. As an imperial memorial and pilgrimage site, it was designed to instill in the visitor “a sacred awe” when confronted with a German Reich that “was already in

<sup>68</sup> Jürgen Tietz, *Das Tannenberg-Nationaldenkmal* (Berlin: Verlag Bauwesen, 1999).

existence a thousand years ago and will exist forever.”<sup>69</sup> Trifels, moreover, was also meant to act as a bulwark against France, the alleged “hereditary enemy” lurking on the other side of the western border. Thus, in a 1937 report to the Palatinate’s regional government in Speyer, Ludwig Siebert underlined that, with the redevelopment of Trifels, the Western March would see the construction of “a monumental memorial to German imperial rule and to the German people’s will to defend itself.”<sup>70</sup> But because the castle was meant to evoke a sense of timelessness and perpetuity, the “Trifels problem” arose for historic preservationists. Siebert wrote that his goal was “not to undertake a questionable renovation of the lost and dead form of a historical edifice”; rather, it was his intention “to express this site’s timeless (*überzeitliche*) significance in a new, artistic form.”<sup>71</sup> According to him, the “new building” at Trifels had to become an “emblem of the inner connectedness of the new Reich to the old empire” and thus “a symbol of the immortality of the German spirit.” This reasoning expressed a fundamentally hybrid mode of thinking about history, one that appropriated specific traditions for the Nazi state and yet strove to transcend historical time altogether. When looking forward in time, the National Socialist imperial ideology took on a decidedly ahistorical claim to perpetuity; by contrast, when looking backward, it identified specific medieval precursors.<sup>72</sup> These included the “German empire of yore” of the Hohenstaufen, represented by Trifels (among other examples) at the propaganda exhibition of 1940–42 devoted to “German Greatness.”<sup>73</sup>

Once more we see how changing conceptions of history had a formative effect on the ways in which monumental remains were architecturally appropriated, interpreted, and reconstructed. This means (to answer our initial questions) that the overall configuration and formal language of the Prussian castle of Stolzenfels, the Wilhelmine-era Haut-Koenigsbourg, and the National Socialist Trifels were determined neither by the specifics of each ruin nor by then-current standards for historicizing architecture. From

69 As W. Zahn expressed it in 1941 in his article “Gralsburg Trifels” for the *Saarländische Tageszeitung*, quoted from Stein, “Trifels und Hohkönigsburg,” 395.

70 Link, *Burgen und Burgenforschung*, 307. On the idea of the Western March (Westmark), see Burkhard Dietz, Helmut Gabel, and Ulrich Tiedau, eds., *Griff nach dem Westen* (Münster: Waxmann, 2003); Jean-Pierre Legendre and Laurent Olivier, eds., *L’archéologie nationale-socialiste dans les pays occupés à l’Ouest du Reich* (Gollion: Infolio, 2007); Thomas Müller, *Imaginerter Westen* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2009).

71 Ludwig Siebert, “Deutsches Kulturschaffen als völkische Pflicht,” in Siebert, *Wiedererstandene Baudenkmale*, 7–10, at 9.

72 Ursula Wiggershaus-Müller, *Nationalsozialismus und Geschichtswissenschaft* (Hamburg: Kovač, 1998), 38–42, 115–19, 161–70; Frank-Lothar Kroll, *Utopie als Ideologie* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1998); Steinkamp and Reudenbach, *Mittelalterbilder im Nationalsozialismus*; Christopher Clark, *Von Zeit und Macht* (Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2018), 189–229, 289–99; Hans Maier, “Hitler und das Reich,” *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 67 (2019): 521–36, at 527–30.

73 Hans Hagemeyer, ed., *Ausstellung Deutsche Größe*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Limpert, 1940–41), 105; William J. Diebold, “The High Middle Ages on Display in the Exhibition ‘Deutsche Größe’ (1940–1942),” in Steinkamp and Reudenbach, *Mittelalterbilder im Nationalsozialismus*, 103–17.

the recognition of historical distance in Schinkel's rebuilding scheme and the interweaving of monument and landscape of memory in his general plan, through Ebhardt's improving reconstruction, to Esterer's construction of timelessness, fundamentally different conceptualizations of history were at work; each produced its own, distinct architectural solution. As a result, there was no reconstruction of the past at work in these buildings; instead, they expressed in monumental form perceptions and interpretations that governed the modern political appropriation of the medieval past.



Michele Lamprakos

## Recovering the Great Mosque of Córdoba: The History of an Idea

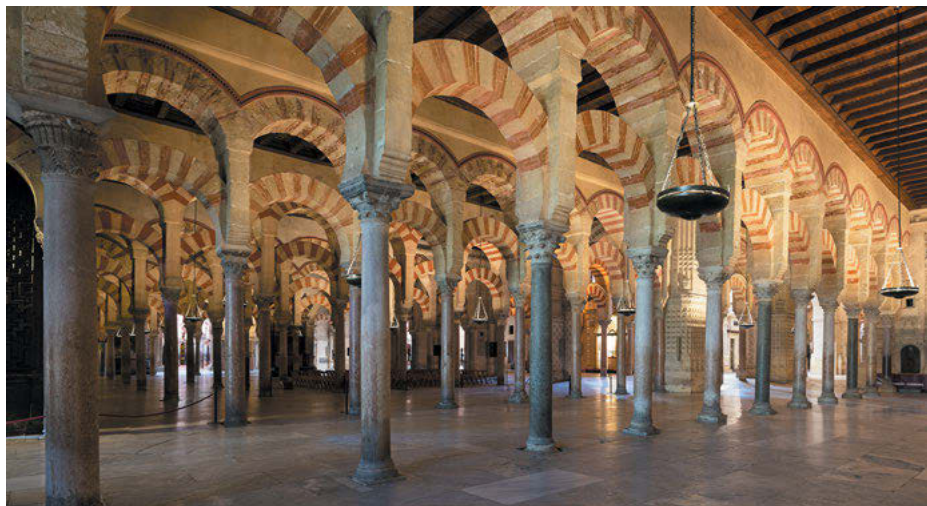


**Fig. 4.1:** Córdoba, Aerial view of the historic center with the Mosque-Cathedral (Mezquita) at center, 2007. Photo: Salvatorecoco/Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 3.0).

For almost eight hundred years, the former Great Mosque of Córdoba—or the “Mezquita” (mosque), as it is still called locally—has served as the city’s cathedral. It was adapted for Catholic worship with relatively minor changes until the sixteenth century, when a massive *crucero* (choir and presbytery) was begun in the center (Figs. 4.1 and 4.2). This strange hybrid structure, however, was inherently unstable: it invited further change

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**Note:** Many individuals and institutions have contributed insights, support, and materials for this essay, which is based on two chapters of my forthcoming book, *Memento Mauri: The Afterlife of the Great Mosque of Cordoba*. Although space prevents me from thanking them all by name, I want to express special gratitude to Rafael de la Hoz Castanys for allowing me access to the private archive of his father, Rafael de la Hoz Arderius. Earlier versions of this essay were presented at the European Architectural Histories Network International Conference, Tallinn, 2018 and the College Art Association Conference, New York, 2019.



**Fig. 4.2:** Córdoba, Mezquita, Interior view toward the piers of the *crucero* from the northwest. Photo: Cornelia Steffens, 2015.

and elaboration. By the mid-eighteenth century, the Islamic architectural fabric around the *crucero* had been obscured by plaster vaults, whitewash, and retablos. But in the era of Romanticism and Liberalism, the process was reversed: bishops and, later, architects working for the Spanish state sought to recover and restore the mosque, an effort that became increasingly politicized in the twentieth century. This essay will focus on the most radical of these efforts: the proposed removal of the *crucero* and the reconstruction of the missing Islamic fabric. The *crucero* was to be disassembled and moved (*traslado*, literally: “translated”) to a new cathedral building designed to house it; while the mosque, rebuilt to its tenth-century state, would become a museum and, in some iterations, open to Muslim worship. Once separated, the mosque and the cathedral would each have its place on the city’s skyline.

The modern history of the Mezquita has been studied in some detail, focusing on the theory and practice of archaeology and restoration.<sup>1</sup> This essay, in contrast, looks at the intersection of architecture, politics, and ideology. During Spain’s long struggle between liberals and the church, historic sites were contested and charged with political meanings. This is especially true for the great Islamic monumental sites that, to different degrees, challenged the country’s National Catholic narrative: Granada’s Al-

<sup>1</sup> See especially Sebastián Herrero, *De lo original a lo auténtico: La restauración de la Mezquita Catedral de Córdoba durante el siglo XX* (Córdoba: Cabildo Catedral de Córdoba, 2018).

hambra, Seville's Giralda, Madinat al-Zahra, and the Great Mosque of Córdoba.<sup>2</sup> As the city's cathedral, the last was the most highly charged of these sites. A beloved local monument, the mosque-cum-cathedral was also the most visible trophy of "Reconquista" in the country.<sup>3</sup> Returning it to its pre-Christian state could be seen as the logical outcome of an antiquarian project or as the recovery of a great architectural space. But it was also a deeply political act that would have undone the legacy of Reconquista—in essence, rewriting the history of Spain.

The *traslado* project, in play for decades under governments of both left and right, has been virtually expunged from the historical record. This essay presents the first full account of the semiclandestine initiative, tracing it from its origins in the interwar period and its links to colonial politics in Morocco to its unlikely revival under Spain's ultra-Catholic dictator Francisco Franco (1892–1975). It serves as a perfect illustration of the ways in which medieval sites have been appropriated and transformed to serve evolving political agendas.

## The *Crucero* and its Modern Reception

In the mid-eighteenth century, a visitor to the Mezquita would have been confused by what he or she saw: a presbytery and choir surrounded by a vast hall of columns. The cathedral chapter had recently covered up the Islamic fabric around the *crucero*: they had raised the vast roofs of the mosque, installed plaster vaults and skylights beneath the painted wood (*artesonado*) ceilings, and whitewashed the distinctive red and white voussoirs of the Islamic arcades (Fig. 4.3). But their efforts were only partially successful; inside, the building still looked like a mosque. Indeed, a Moroccan ambassador reported that the Great Mosque greeted him and his entourage like an old friend.<sup>4</sup>

2 For a relevant discussion of Madinat al-Zahra, the great Umayyad palatine city near Córdoba, see D. Fairchild Ruggles, "Historiography and the Rediscovery of Madinat al-Zahra," *Islamic Studies* 30 (1991): 129–40.

3 The so-called Castilian "reconquest" of the peninsula spanned from the eleventh to the late fifteenth century. On the concept of Reconquista in modern historiography see John Tolan, "Using the Middle Ages to Construct Spanish Identity," in *Historiographical Approaches to Medieval Colonization of East Central Europe*, ed. J.M. Pikorsky (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 329–47; Alejandro García Sanjuán, "Rejecting Al-Andalus, Exalting the Reconquista: Historical Memory in Contemporary Spain," *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 10 (2018): 127–45.

4 Abu al-'Abbas ibn Madhi al-Ghazzal's visit in 1766–67 as recorded in "Ambassade marocaine en Espagne au 18e siècle," trans. A. Gorguon, in *The Umayyad Mosque in Córdoba: Texts and Studies*, ed. Fuat Sezgin, Carl Ehrig-Eggert, and E. Neubauer (Frankfurt: Goethe University, 2008), 1:456–67.





**Fig. 4.3:** Córdoba, Mezquita, Interior view ca. 1867 showing the arcades before whitewash was removed; albumen print on paper by J. Laurent & Cía. Photo: Biblioteca Nacional de España, Biblioteca Digital Hispánica, 4539064–1001.

By this time, the Mezquita was the only surviving example of a common phenomenon in medieval Iberian cities: mosques adapted for Christian worship. Córdoba's Mezquita was doubtlessly the most magnificent of these "Christianized mosques."<sup>5</sup> Like Muslim chroniclers before them, Christian writers praised it as a wonder of the world, citing its forest of marble columns that allowed uninterrupted views in all directions. Gradually, however, Christianized mosques were replaced by new cathedral buildings—a process that reached a fever pitch after the 1492 conquest of Granada, the last Muslim polity on the peninsula. During this same period, in the late 1480s and again in the early 1520s, two of Córdoba's bishops tried to radically alter the Mezquita. Córdoba's city council blocked both projects and the matter was referred to the monarchs for adjudication. Finally, in the mid-1520s, the *crucero* was begun in the middle of the mosque. But when Hapsburg Emperor Charles V saw the demolition, he allegedly reprimanded Church authorities, saying: "Had I known what this was, I would

<sup>5</sup> The term *mezquita cristianizada* is used by Alfonso Jiménez Martín, *Anatomía de la Catedral de Sevilla* (Sevilla: Diputación Provincial, 2013).



not have allowed it . . . because you have done what could be done anywhere; and you have undone that which is unique in the world.”<sup>6</sup>

The design of the *crucero*, which evolved over the course of the sixteenth century, is exceedingly complex and thus beyond the scope of this essay.<sup>7</sup> The main point is that its initial architect, Hernán Ruiz I, intentionally created a hybrid structure. Rather than demolishing the mosque completely, he retained and even reconstructed much of the Islamic fabric around the *crucero*. When it was finally completed in the early seventeenth century, the *crucero* towered above the roof of the mosque, emblazoning the skyline with a triumphant symbol of Christianity. And yet inside, the surrounding mosque fabric appears intact (see Fig. 4.2 and Fig. 4.4). This strange design solution would have fateful consequences in the modern period, inspiring restorers to recover the mosque—a process that Heather Ecker has called



**Fig. 4.4:** Córdoba, View of the Mezquita from the Guadalquivir River. From David Roberts, *Picturesque sketches in Spain taken during the years 1832 & 1833*. Photo: Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LD-DIG-ds-16252.

<sup>6</sup> Reported by Juan Gómez Bravo, canon of Córdoba, in 1739; *Catálogo de los obispos de Córdoba* (Córdoba: J. Rodríguez, 1778), 1:419–20.

<sup>7</sup> See Michele Lamprakos, *Memento Mauri: The Afterlife of the Great Mosque of Córdoba* (Austin: University of Texas Press, forthcoming).

“re-Islamicization.”<sup>8</sup> In 1767, when the Mezquita was surveyed for a publication on national monuments, the architects tried to deduce the original form of the mosque, even drawing a hypothetical cross section without the *crucero*.<sup>9</sup> Following the Napoleonic invasions (1808–14), *afrancesado* bishops, encouraged by scholars in Córdoba and Madrid, began to uncover fragments of the mosque beneath the Baroque layers.<sup>10</sup> They focused on the magnificent addition built by caliph al-Hakam II (r. 961–76) which had served as the liturgical heart of the cathedral before the *crucero* was completed. These efforts began with the disassembly of San Pedro Chapel beneath the central dome of the *maq̣sura* (royal enclosure) and restoration of the *mihrab*, the niche that indicates the direction of Islamic prayer (here, a small recessed room; Fig. 4.5). A key moment occurred in the 1860s when Bishop Juan Alfonso de Albuquerque ordered workmen to strip whitewash from the polychrome arcades, a project that would last two decades. Finally, from the late 1870s, the retablo and vault of Villaviciosa Chapel—the entry vestibule of al-Hakam’s addition—were dismantled, revealing the tenth-century dome and the surviving, interlaced arches that supported it.<sup>11</sup>

Restoration of the Islamic fabric started as an antiquarian endeavor, but with the rise of Spanish liberalism it acquired political undertones. In this era monuments were not dry historical documents: they were alive, with a moralizing and regenerative force. Córdoba’s hybrid mosque-cathedral, in particular, became a covert battleground in Spain’s culture wars, symbolizing the tension between its “two” medieval pasts: Islamic and Christian.<sup>12</sup> For conservatives, Spain was a primordially Christian country that had been destroyed by the Arabs; with the defeat of Granada in 1492, Christianity was “restored” and the country resumed its natural path of development. Liberals developed a counternarrative, praising the Arabs as a civilizing force and Al-Andalus (Islamic Spain) as the golden age of Spanish history; the Church and the Inquisition were responsible for the country’s decline and backwardness.<sup>13</sup> For liberals and Romantics, the *crucero* epitomized

8 Heather Ecker, “The Great Mosque of Córdoba in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries,” *Muqarnas* 20 (2003): 113–41, at 121.

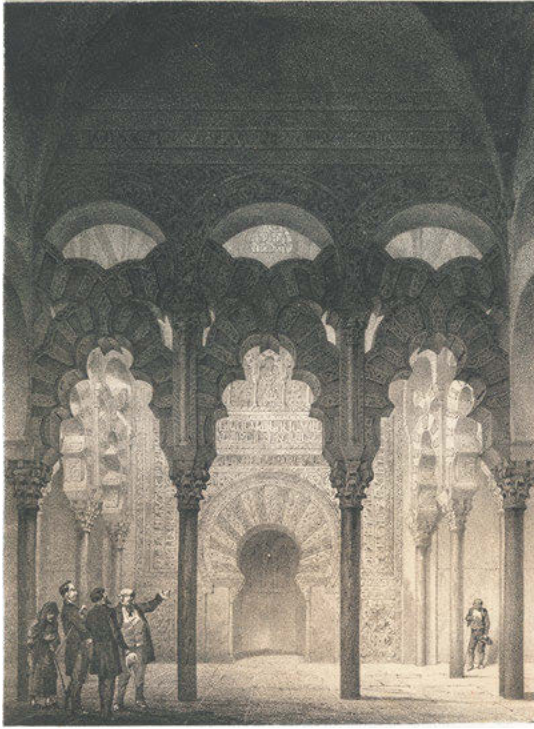
9 Executed in 1767 for the newly established San Fernando Royal Academy of Fine Arts, the drawings were finally published in 1787; Delfín Rodríguez Ruiz, *La memoria frágil: José de Hermosilla y las anti-güedades árabes de España* (Madrid: Fundación Cultural COAM, 1992).

10 Herrero, *De lo original*, 53. The term *afrancesado* (Francophile) was applied to Spanish elites who supported Napoleon. See James Monroe, *Islam and the Arabs in Spanish Scholarship* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 49–50.

11 Manuel Nieto Cumplido, “La arqueología medieval cordobesa en el siglo XIX,” *Boletín de la Real Academia de Córdoba* 106 (June 1984): 71–102; Herrero, *De lo original*, 53–56.

12 The idea of two competing medieval pasts is from Margarita Diaz-Andreu, “Islamic Archaeology and the Origin of the Spanish Nation,” in *Nationalism and Archaeology in Europe*, ed. Diaz-Andreu and Timothy Champion (London: UCL Press, 1996), 68–89.

13 Diaz-Andreu, “Islamic Archaeology,” 69; Tolan, “Using the Middle Ages,” 333–34; Monroe, *Islam and the Arabs*, 65–67; Ruggles, “Historiography,” 129.



**Fig. 4.5:** Francisco Javier Parcerisa, “Chapel of the *Mihrab*.” From Pedro de Madrazo y Kuntz, *Recuerdos y Bellezas de España: Córdoba* (Madrid, 1855).

mized Catholic fanaticism. “One’s gaze scans the monument, encounters [the *crucero*], and one’s heart beats with anger at seeing such a sacrilege,” wrote art historian Pedro de Madrazo y Kuntz, adding, “Was there no other place in Córdoba to build this chapel?”<sup>14</sup> He may have been echoing Théophile Gautier, who had visited Córdoba in 1840 and lamented the city’s lost glory: “The life seems to have ebbed from this great body once animated by the active circulation of Moorish blood . . . but Cordoba has her mosque, a building unique in the world and entirely novel.”<sup>15</sup> He regretted, however, that it was

nowadays obstructed by the Catholic church, an enormous heavy mass crammed into the heart of the Arab mosque . . . This parasite of a church, this monstrous fungus of stone, an architectural wart breaking out on the back of the Arab structure . . . does not lack merits of its own; anywhere else one would admire it, but it must forever be regretted that it should occupy this place.

<sup>14</sup> Pedro de Madrazo y Kuntz, *Recuerdos y Bellezas de España: Córdoba* (Madrid: José Repullés, 1855), 63. Madrazo began excavations at Madinat al-Zahra with Pascual de Gayangos, translator of Ahmad Ibn Muhammad al-Maqqari’s *Nafh al-tib min ghusn al-Andalus al-ratib wa dhikr waziriha Lisan al-Din Ibn al-Khatib* (Cairo, 1629–30), the most complete known history of Islamic Spain. See Maribel Fierro with Luis Molina, “al-Maqqari,” in *Essays in Arabic Literary Biography, 1350–1850*, ed., Joseph E. Lowry and Devin J. Stewart (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2009), 273–83; Ruggles, “Historiography,” 133.

<sup>15</sup> Théophile Gautier, *A Romantic in Spain*, trans. Robert Anell (Oxford: Signal Books, 2001), 254–5.

Gautier went on to describe the city council's defense of the Mezquita in 1523 and Charles V's condemnation. "These just reproaches caused the chapter to hang their heads," he concluded, "but the harm was done."<sup>16</sup>

When the Mezquita was declared a national monument in 1882, church authorities began to lose control over the restoration process. Ricardo Velázquez Bosco (1843–1923)—an eminent architect, master restorer, and expert on what was then called "Arab architecture"—was appointed as the first state architect in 1887.<sup>17</sup> At this time, restoration practice was heavily influenced by French architect and theorist Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc (1814–79). "To restore a building," he famously wrote, "is not to preserve it, repair or rebuild it; it is to reinstate it in a condition of completeness that could never have existed at any given moment."<sup>18</sup> Like Viollet-le-Duc, Velázquez sought to recover the idealized form of monuments based on careful research and informed speculation. Although we know little about Velázquez's life, we know that he was a liberal; moreover, his 1891 proposal for the Mezquita clearly reveals his attitude toward the Church. He called for the removal of the "innumerable eyesores" that had accumulated over the centuries and continued to accumulate, completely disfiguring the monument. Unfortunately, he noted, most of these additions had to be conserved "for artistic or other reasons." Nevertheless, it was "urgent to halt . . . desecrations in the most important monument of western Mohammedan architecture, and certainly one of the most notable monuments in Europe."<sup>19</sup> The document was accompanied by a color-coded plan showing Islamic and early Christian interventions in black, Renaissance elements "to be conserved for artistic or other reasons" in gray, and elements to be removed in red (Fig. 4.6).

Velázquez worked at the Mezquita with a team of local collaborators until his death in 1923. Although he was able to complete only a small portion of the work he envisioned, his proposals would guide restoration work for almost a century. Within the building, he sought to recuperate the spatial reading of the mosque.<sup>20</sup> To this end, he planned to demolish the eighteenth-century plaster vaults and reconstruct the *artesonado* ceilings, an ambitious project that would only be partially completed in the 1980s. He aimed to reconstitute al-Hakam's addition by disencumbering the *qibla*

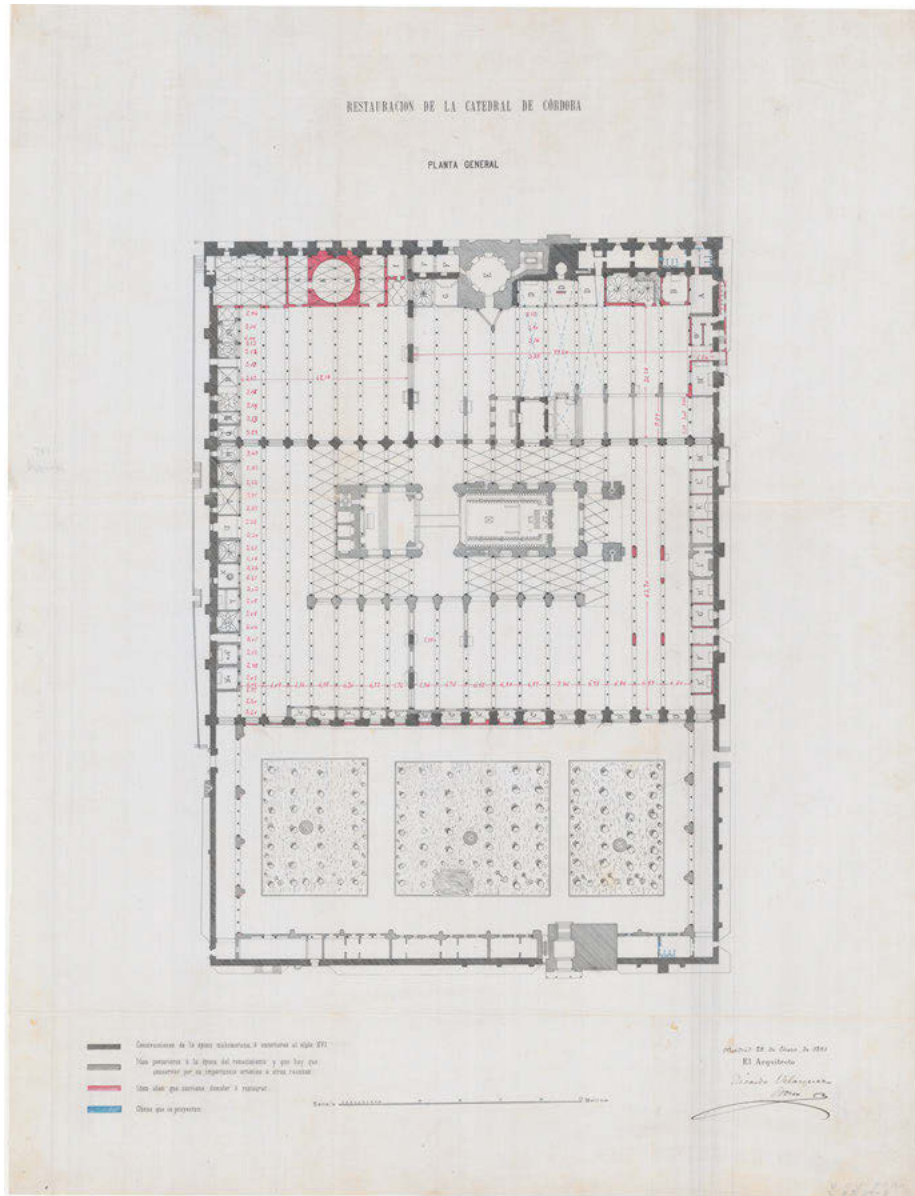
<sup>16</sup> Gautier, *Romantic in Spain*, 259.

<sup>17</sup> He would later direct work at Madinat al-Zahra (from 1910) and at the Alhambra (from 1917) where his plans would be implemented following his death by his disciple, Leopoldo Torres Balbás (1923–36). See Herrero, *De lo original*, 56–101; Miguel Ángel Baledellou Santolaria, *Ricardo Velázquez Bosco* (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura/Dirección General de Bellas Artes y Archivos, 1990), 118–52.

<sup>18</sup> Viollet-le-Duc, "Restauration," in *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française* (Paris: B. Bance, 1866), 8:14–34; trans. M. F. Hearn, *The Architectural Theory of Viollet-le-Duc* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 269. For Viollet-le-Duc's theory of restoration, see also the contributions by Bernd Carqué and Kevin Murphy in this volume.

<sup>19</sup> Ricardo Velázquez, "Memoria," 1891, Alcalá de Henares, Archivo General de la Administración, Fondo (05)14.2, signatura 31/8044, expediente 3.

<sup>20</sup> Herrero, *De lo original*, 71.



**Fig. 4.6:** Ricardo Velázquez Bosco, Restoration plan for the Mezquita, 1891. Madrid, Ministerio de Educación, Archivo General de la Administración, IDD (05) 014.002, caja 31/08044, expediente 3.



(south) wall and restoring the *mihrab*, *maqsura*, and entry vestibule, which involved correcting earlier restorations (Figs. 4.7 and 4.8). He also sought to disencumber and restore the exterior facades. His restoration of the magnificent portals on the east facade, in particular, reestablished the image of the mosque in the city (Figs. 4.9 and 4.10).



**Fig. 4.7:** Córdoba, Mezquita, *Mihrab* nave in the late nineteenth century. From Albert Frederick Calvert and Walter Matthews Gallichan, *Cordova, a City of the Moors* (London, 1907), plate 61.



**Fig. 4.8:** Córdoba, Mezquita, Restored *mihrab* nave. Photo: Cornelia Steffens, 2015.



**Fig. 4.9:** Córdoba, Mezquita, East facade, ca. 1870; albumen print on paper by J. Laurent & Cía. Photo: Archivo y Biblioteca del Patronato de la Alhambra y Generalife F-05520.



**Fig. 4.10:** Córdoba, Mezquita, Portal on the east facade restored by Ricardo Velázquez Bosco and the sculptor Mateo Inurria after 1908. Photo: Cornelia Steffens, 2015.

Velázquez's work had a huge impact, acclaimed by the cultural elite in Córdoba and beyond. But his interventions also produced tensions with Church authorities. For example, in some cases reopening Islamic-era doors entailed demolition of chapels and offices on the inside. A particular point of contention was the north facade facing the courtyard, called the Patio de los Naranjos. For centuries the aisles of the prayer hall had communicated directly with the patio via arched openings; but following construction of the *crucero*, chapels were built along this facade and the arches were infilled (Fig. 4.11).<sup>21</sup> Velázquez and later restorers wanted to reopen them, allowing light to filter into the interior and reestablishing visual continuity between the forest of columns and the garden-like setting of the patio. In his 1891 plan, Velázquez showed all of the arches on the patio facade in red, indicating that chapels and masonry infill would be removed (see Fig. 4.6). But in 1916 he wrote that only a few arches could be opened



**Fig. 4.11:** Córdoba, Mezquita, View of the patio facade in the early nineteenth century. From James Cavanah Murphy, *The Arabian Antiquities of Spain*, 1815. Photo: Courtesy of the Digital Library for the Decorative Arts and Material Culture, University of Wisconsin.

<sup>21</sup> Bernardo de Aldrete, a high-ranking ecclesiastical official and scholar, reported this to King Philip IV in 1637; “Relación de la planta de la capilla real y de su estado temporal y spiritual,” in Rafael Ramírez de Arellano, *Inventario monumental y artístico de la Provincia de Córdoba*, ed. José Valverde Madrid (Córdoba: Monte de Piedad y Caja de Ahorros, 1983), 678.

because the rest contained chapels.<sup>22</sup> A decade later the patio facade was still contested.<sup>23</sup>

If Velázquez's main goal was to reconstitute the spatial reading of the mosque, the primary obstacle was the *crucero* itself. On the 1891 plan he showed it in gray, that is, as an element that had to be conserved "for artistic or other reasons." But did he dream of removing it?<sup>24</sup> In cathedrals across Spain, massive choir stalls—architectural and sculptural elements in their own right—were being removed to allow uninterrupted views of the nave and altar.<sup>25</sup> In fact, Velázquez intervened in at least one such project in 1915 while he was working at the Mezquita: he proposed that the Baroque choir of the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela be moved out of the nave. We know that he admired Viollet-le-Duc's cathedral restorations in France which aimed at structural clarity, whiteness, and visibility—and which transformed living religious sites into secularized, national monuments.<sup>26</sup>

## Córdoba Reborn

As Velázquez's restorations were underway, the Mezquita became enmeshed in a complex web of interests. In 1912, the city's urban core was declared historic and slated for protection, with the restored Mezquita as its crown jewel. One aim was to promote tourism, playing on Córdoba's exoticism and "difference."<sup>27</sup> For Republicans the Mezquita symbolized the new society they were trying to create, free of Church dominance. "We were the greatest country on the planet not under Philip II but under caliph 'Abd al-Rahman III," wrote historian and politician Luis de Zulueta in *El Sol*, Madrid's leading Liberal newspaper. For Zulueta, the destruction of the Mezquita was a metaphor for the tragic destruction of historical memory. "Do you remember the incomparable Cordoban mosque, crudely destroyed by putting a cathedral choir inside it?" he wrote. "In

22 Herrero, *De lo original*, 92–93.

23 Antonio Flórez, who succeeded Velázquez from 1924 to 1926, wrote: "Barely had this work begun . . . when it produced not a few protests because . . . the majority [of arches; *huecos*] are occupied by chapels conceded to private patrons." Flórez, "La restauración de la Mezquita-Catedral," *Diario Córdoba*, 17 February 1925.

24 For a different view see Herrero, *De lo original*, 75, 95–96.

25 Pedro Navascués Palacio, "Coros y sillerías: un siglo de destrucción," *Descubrir el Arte* 15 (2000): 112–14.

26 Belén María Castro Fernández, *Francisco Pons-Sorolla y Arnau* (Santiago de Compostela: Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, 2007), 471–74. On Viollet-le-Duc's restoration goals and their effects, see Kevin Murphy, *Memory and Modernity: Viollet-le-Duc at Vézelay* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000).

27 On the slogan "Spain is Different" (first used in 1929, revived in 1964), see Eugenia Afinoguénova and Jaume Martí-Olivella, "A Nation Under Tourists' Eyes" in *Spain is (Still) Different*, ed. Afinoguénova and Martí-Olivella (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008), xi n1.



this century we repeat the same moral error when we destroy our history, eradicating the Spanish glories of the caliphate from our national conscience.” Muslims and Christians were both Spanish, he continued; Christians could have continued to worship in the mosque, leaving it “respected and intact.”<sup>28</sup> Andalusian nationalists, in particular, romanticized the Islamic past. As officials in local governments and on provincial monuments commissions, they promoted a new Andalusian image in cities throughout the region.<sup>29</sup> For some, Islamic monuments reflected a unique, racially mixed culture that could be revived, leading to Spain’s regeneration. In 1916, Blas Infante, the movement’s leader, called the Mezquita “the great testimony to Córdoba’s spiritual and earthly force,” a reminder of a great civilization that had sunk into decay.<sup>30</sup>

For many on the left, then, the Islamic past was a tool of self-fashioning and political resistance: it was the Orient “within.” But there was also the Orient “without”: notably, the protectorate in Morocco, established in 1912.<sup>31</sup> With the loss of Spanish colonies in the Americas and the Philippines, North Africa was Spain’s last chance at empire. In 1927, Spanish forces pacified the Rif mountains (with French help) after fifteen years of fighting. Colonial officials portrayed the occupation not as a foreign adventure but as the natural outcome of a shared history.<sup>32</sup> To secure the support of traditional elites in Morocco, they built and restored mosques and shrines and even sponsored the hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca.<sup>33</sup> It was in this context that the idea of removing the *crucero* must have emerged, because in 1931 Shakib Arslan, Druze emir and anti-colonial reformer, reported that “the idea has been around for a long time.”<sup>34</sup>

In the interwar period, a nostalgia for Islamic Spain inspired anti-colonial Arab and Muslim thinkers; for them, it represented the rebirth of a nation, much as it did for Andalusian nationalists in Spain.<sup>35</sup> One of them was Arslan, who by this time was recognized as the orchestrator of the wider Arab-Islamic protest movement.<sup>36</sup> When he visited Spain in 1930 intending to write a history of Al-Andalus, he was deeply moved by

28 Luis de Zulueta, “Un olvido nacional—el Millenario del Califato,” *El Sol*, 12 January 1929, 1. Zulueta would serve as Minister of State under the Second Republic.

29 Salvador Cruz Artacho, “A la Búsqueda de un ‘Ideal’ para Andalucía,” in *Bética y el regionalismo andaluz*, ed. Juan José Hurtado et al. (Seville: Fundación Centro de Estudios Andaluces, 2013), 76–77.

30 Blas Infante, “Conferenza de Blas Infante Sobre el Regionalismo,” *Andalucía* 1, no. 7 (December 1916): 2.

31 The idea of the Orient as both self and other is based on Susan Martín Márquez, *Disorientations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 8–9.

32 Diaz Andreu, “Islamic Archaeology,” 77.

33 Josep Lluís Mateo Dieste, *La “hermandad” hispano-marroquí* (Barcelona: Bellaterra 2003), 231–47.

34 Letter to ‘Abd al-Salam Bannuna, 14 May 1931, excerpted in Muhammad Ibn ‘Azzuz Hakim, *Ab al-Haraka al-Wataniyya al-Maghribiyya, al-Hajj ‘Abd al-Salam Bannuna* (Rabat: al-Hilal al-‘Arabiyya lil tiba’a wa al-nashr, 1987), 2:440–41.

35 Alonso Nieves Paradela, *El Otro laberinto español: Viajeros árabes a España entre el siglo XVII y 1936* (Madrid: Siglo XIX de España, 2005), 141.

36 W. Cleveland, *Islam Against the West* (London: Al Saqi Books, 1985), 77.

the Mezquita. A year later, in the tumultuous lead-up to the Second Spanish Republic (1931–39), he urged Moroccan nationalist leader ‘Abd al-Salam Bannuna to lobby for the reconstruction of the Mosque of Córdoba—“removing the church from it (*ikhraj al-kanisa minhu*)”—and for its return to Muslims. This was an old idea that had been blocked by the pro-Church monarchy, but “now the freedom of spirit is rising” and pro-Church forces were retreating, so Bannuna should seize the moment. The project was in Spain’s interest: What better way to capture the hearts of the million Muslims in the Rif than “returning this mosque of mosques to the way it was” and restoring Muslim control?<sup>37</sup> Significantly, Arslan described this as an act of reparation. “Our Rif brothers should say to the men of the Spanish Republic: the Spaniards took at least twenty thousand mosques and turned them into churches,” but “we’re only asking for this one mosque because of its fame and greatness and fineness and craft.”<sup>38</sup>

Within weeks Bannuna had organized a delegation to Madrid, and the initial response seems to have been encouraging.<sup>39</sup> Soon several proposals for the Mezquita were made on the floor of the Cortes (Spanish Parliament) in the context of a wider discussion about nationalization of church properties. A decade earlier Antonio Jaén Morente, historian and president of Córdoba’s Provincial Monuments Commission, had called the *crucero* a “great artistic profanation.”<sup>40</sup> Now, as a deputy in the Cortes, he asked that “my Cordoban cathedral . . . an example of liberty, tolerance, and vindication” be opened to Muslim worship.<sup>41</sup> Two weeks later, a motion by Spanish deputies from the Moroccan cities of Ceuta and Melilla went farther, proposing that “the Gothic part of the Mosque of Córdoba, destined for the Catholic cult, be removed [*se traslade*] in order to construct a new cathedral from its parts.” The mosque would be restored to its original form; it could then be converted into a museum and possibly opened to Muslim worship.<sup>42</sup>

Significantly, some conservative Catholics *also* wanted to undo the Mezquita’s hybridity. In summer 1930 Jean Ybarnegaray, a conservative member of the French Chamber of Deputies from the Basque region, visited Córdoba and must have heard about the debate. He later told the Madrid journal *Estampa*:

37 Arslan to Bannuna, 14 May 1931, excerpted in Ibn ‘Azzuz Hakim, *Ab al-Haraka*, 2:440–1; Tayyib Bannuna, *Nidhaluna al-qawmi fi al-rasa’il al-mutabadala bayna al-Amir Shakib Arsalan wa-al-Hajj ‘Abd al-Salam Bannuna* (Tangier: Matba’a Dar al-Amal, 1989), 234–35.

38 Arslan to Bannuna, 12 June 1931; cited in Bannuna, *Nidhaluna al-qawmi*, 240. On Arslan’s interest in the mosque, see also ‘Umar Ryad, “New Episodes in Moroccan Nationalism under Colonial Rule,” *Journal of North African Studies* 16 (2011), 128–9; Eric Calderwood, *Colonial al-Andalus* (Cambridge: Belknap, 2018), 251–52, 266–68.

39 Ibn ‘Azzuz Hakim, *Ab al-Haraka*, 441–42.

40 Antonio Jaén Morente, *Resumen de la Historia de Córdoba* (Córdoba: Imprenta del Diario de Córdoba, 1921), 145–46.

41 *Diario de Sesiones de las Cortes Constituyentes*, 16 October 1931, 1800–1802.

42 Luis Codina and Don Manuel Padrós, *Diario de Sesiones de las Cortes Constituyentes*, 27 October 1931, no. 128, 1944.

With regard to Córdoba, I will tell you my opinion in all frankness. I would like to see something done with Córdoba. The Catholics of Spain and of the entire world, friends of the arts, should build a new cathedral, a temple that is truly Christian. The Mezquita cannot be the sanctuary of God; a Christian does not feel at home in the midst of that jungle of Moorish columns. In exchange, for the artist and the aficionado, the Mezquita, converted into a museum, will recover all its character.<sup>43</sup>

In the interwar period, then, there was a strong sense that something must be done about the Mezquita's dual nature. Several overlapping proposals emerged: removing the *crucero*, turning the building into a museum and a touristic monument, and opening it to Muslim worship. The first two would have required building a new cathedral, while the last could be accommodated in the existing building if Church authorities would allow Muslims to pray there. These ideas faded in and out in subsequent decades, alongside plans for a great Islamic or African exposition in Córdoba.<sup>44</sup>

These discussions were part of a wider international debate about the role of religious monuments in modern, secular societies. In 1935, Kemal Atatürk famously approved the transformation of the Hagia Sophia into a museum. (The great Byzantine church had been converted into an imperial mosque by Mehmet I when he conquered Istanbul in 1453.)<sup>45</sup> Much as the new Hagia Sophia museum embodied the secular and humanistic values of the Turkish Republic, the secularized Mezquita would reflect the values of Republican Spain.<sup>46</sup> But transforming the Hagia Sophia into a museum did not entail the kind of architectural "surgery" that would have been required at Córdoba, where the *crucero* was intricately interwoven with the mosque fabric.

The debate in Córdoba can also be linked to the interwar politics of mosque-building. The Great Mosque of Paris—erected in memory of Moroccan soldiers who died fighting for the French in World War I—had been completed in 1926, attracting attention throughout the Arab-Muslim world. "Don't you see how the French built a mosque in Paris that is tall and broad?" wrote Arslan to Bannuna. "The Mosque of Córdoba does not have to be built new: it's an existing building. And Spain doesn't have to pay anything to make it a mosque again; if expense is involved in removing the church from the middle, the Muslims will take care of it."<sup>47</sup> That was an omen of things to come.

43 Jean Ybarnegaray, "Un Diputado de los Bajos Pirineos que es un gran Pelotari," *Estampa*, 12 August 1930.

44 "Una Exposición Hispano-Islámico" *Al-Mulk* 1 (1959–60): 133–34.

45 In 2020, Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, reversed the 1935 decision, converting Hagia Sophia back into a mosque.

46 Ceren Katipoğlu and Çağla Caner-Yüksel, "Hagia Sophia 'Museum,'" in *Constructing Cultural Identity, Representing Social Power*, ed. Çana Bilsel et al. (Pisa: Plus Pisa Press, 2010), 205–25.

47 Arslan to Bannuna, 12 June 1931; cited in Bannuna, *Nidhaluna al-qawmi*, 240.

## From the Second Republic to the Franco Regime

In 1936, under the leadership of General Franco, the so-called Nationalists rose up against the democratically elected Spanish Republic, resulting in three years of bloody civil war (1936–39). Nationalists portrayed their struggle as a new “crusade” that would liberate Spain from the “foreign influence” of Marxism. In this narrative Franco was the new St. James, slayer of the “infidel” Reds who were likened to “Moors.” Like most leaders of the uprising, Franco had spent years in the Rif as a high-ranking officer in the Army of Africa. Under cover of German and Italian air forces, he crossed the Strait of Gibraltar with the help of Moroccan legionnaires, recruiting them for jihad (holy war) against atheists.<sup>48</sup> These two contradictory discourses—one designed for a resurgent, Catholic Spain, the other for colonized Muslims—produced two different policies under Franco’s dictatorship (1939–75). Within Spain, archaeology and historiography, architecture, and heritage were deployed in a massive propaganda effort steered by the Falangists, an influential faction in Franco’s right-wing coalition. Ideologically charged sites were meticulously rebuilt and framed as places of National Catholic memory, linking Franco to the Catholic kings and their triumph over Islam. But within Morocco the regime continued and expanded pro-Islamic policies, organizing the hajj and restoring and building religious structures.<sup>49</sup> Even during the war, officials instrumentalized Córdoba’s Islamic past. In May of 1939, Foreign Minister Juan Luis Beigbeder (formerly High Commissioner of Morocco, 1937–39) said the city would “rise again from its ashes” to become the locus of a Hispano-Arab renaissance.<sup>50</sup>

It was in this context that Franco’s regime quietly took up the old Republican idea—removing the *crucero*, rebuilding the mosque, and opening it to Muslim worship—as a gesture of gratitude toward the Islamic world for its support in the Civil War.<sup>51</sup> Franco himself expressed this intention as early as 1937, the height of the war. In a speech in Seville to Muslim pilgrims returning from the hajj, he highlighted the historic brotherhood between Spaniards and Muslims who, as people of faith, “must unite against those who have none.” In the Spanish version of his speech Franco said: “Just as today you visit Mecca, the Orient of your faith . . . so too, tomorrow, will you, the Muslims of the world, return to our holy places which I long to revive.”<sup>52</sup> One of these holy places was doubtlessly Córdoba’s Mezquita, although Franco did not refer to it by name. But he did

48 Rocio Velasco de Castro, “La imagen del ‘moro’ en la formulación e instrumentalización del africanismo franquista,” *Hispania* 74, no. 246 (2014): 205–36.

49 Mosques, cemeteries, and hospitals were also built in Spain for Moroccan troops; these include the Almorábito Mosque in Córdoba (1937), designed by Municipal Architect Carlos Sáenz Santamaría.

50 Juan Luis Beigbeder and Amin al-Rihani, *Discursos pronunciados por Coronel Beigbeder y Amin er-Rihani* (Larache: Artes Gráficas Boscá, 1940) 7–8; Calderwood, *Colonial al-Andalus*, 162.

51 Juan de Contreras y López de Ayala [Marquis of Lozoya], “La Islamización de la Mezquita no remediaría nada,” *Diario Ya*, 7 November 1972.

52 “La estancia de generalísimo Franco en Sevilla,” *ABC Sevilla*, 4 April 1937.

so in the Arabic version transmitted by Moroccan historian Ahmad al-Rahuni, who was in attendance and whom Franco had appointed to lead the hajj. According to al-Rahuni, Franco pledged to “prepare [for Muslims] the Mosque of Córdoba and its environs so that it can be for them like a Kaaba to which they head from every mountain pass for worship and learning.”<sup>53</sup>

Following the Civil War the regime studied *traslado* for years, but nothing happened. The official silence surrounding the project suggests that it was highly sensitive and controversial.<sup>54</sup> Yet, in fact, it was a well-known, open secret: visiting dignitaries and tourists were told about plans to move the “church” to another site. Meanwhile, local boosters sought to capitalize on Córdoba’s past through expositions and other initiatives that celebrated ties with the Islamic world. Especially under Mayor Antonio Cruz Conde (1951–62), various projects amplified the historic core’s Islamic-Andalusian character, preparing the city for the many tourists expected to arrive as Spain sought to rehabilitate its image on the international stage.

The post-Civil War period was a time of brutal repression and severe economic hardship. Spain was isolated because of its links to the Axis powers during World War II; it thus needed the Arab world, although that conflicted with its colonial agenda. In the 1950s, Franco took advantage of the Cold War to move closer to Western democracies. The old Falangist guard would soon be purged and a new class of technocrats would seek to modernize the economy through foreign investment, some of which was expected to come from oil-rich Arab states. In 1956 France withdrew from Morocco, and Arab states pressured Franco to do the same. After obtaining independence, Morocco’s King Muhammad V met with Franco in Madrid and was flown to Córdoba the next day, where he prayed at the Mezquita (Fig. 4.12). The local press recalled a time when “beneath the arches of the Mezquita, our ancestors, Islamic and Christian, prayed together [*sic*]; . . . [now] Andalusians and Moroccans feel united once again by the bond of history.”<sup>55</sup> That same month, UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) visited Córdoba, and the press celebrated the growing number of tourists.<sup>56</sup> Meanwhile plans were unveiled for a great Hispano-Islamic Exposition, with extensive fairgrounds located next to the historic center. Organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with Franco’s approval, the Expo was directed by an interministerial committee that included the leading Arabists and

53 *Al-Rihla al-Makkiyya* (Tetuan: Instituto General Franco de Estudios y Investigación Hispano-Arabe, 1941), 228; translated in Calderwood, *Colonial al-Andalus*, 162.

54 The Marquis of Lozoya, who served as Director General of Fine Arts (1939–51), wrote: “I opposed it then, insofar as I was able, and I was fortunate to have been heard” (“La Islamización”). For more on the Marquis of Lozoya and his views on restoration and Spanish heritage, see the contribution by Francisco Moreno Martín in this volume.

55 *Diario Córdoba*, 8 April 1956.

56 “La UNESCO en Córdoba,” *Diario Córdoba*, 22 April 1956, 1, 3; “Cada día es mas elevado el número de extranjeros,” *Diario Córdoba*, 26 April 1956, 8. Spain was admitted to the United Nations in 1955.



**Fig. 4.12:** King Muhammad V of Morocco visits the Mezquita after securing independence from Spain. Photo by Ricardo Rodríguez Sánchez, 4 April 1956. Córdoba, Municipal Archive, FO/A 80-02-17. Reprinted with permission of the Municipal Archive of Córdoba.

archaeologists of the day.<sup>57</sup> But the event was cancelled for reasons that have never been explained.

During this period, dozens of Arab and Muslim dignitaries were invited to Córdoba. The highlight of every official visit was a tour of the Mezquita, carefully orchestrated to avoid the *crucero*—so as not to offend Muslim sensibilities. Some, like King Sa'ud of Saudi Arabia who visited in 1957, were allowed to pray in front of the *mihrab*. In his memoirs, Cruz Conde recalled that the king's emotional oration unsettled the cathedral canons; but the mayor assured them that the king was praying to the same God and encouraged them to join him. Franco worried that the *crucero* would disturb illustrious Muslim visitors and even considered omitting Córdoba from official itineraries. Yet he saw the conservation and enhancement of the Mezquita as a great responsibility; as such (in Cruz Conde's words) "the triumph of the Cross over Islam seven centuries ago could not prevail." Despite his staunch Catholicism and despite reservations in the Church hierarchy, Franco

considered ending Catholic worship [in the monument] . . . He relished the idea of moving the Cathedral stone by stone to another place, restoring the Mosque to its original state. But he wanted to be very cautious and gather all kinds of opinions, noting how passionate they all were. He also agreed that the matter was very delicate.<sup>58</sup>

Such an enormous and improbable undertaking is more understandable if we recall the large-scale reconstructions going on across postwar Europe and beyond. The 1931 Athens Charter had established new international norms for restoration: monuments were first and foremost documents of the past; as such, not only original fabric but later additions must be preserved as unique expressions of their respective eras. These historicist criteria would be reiterated in more definitive terms in the Venice Charter of 1964. But there was a gap between theory and practice.<sup>59</sup> Facing the enormous scale of wartime destruction and armed with new technologies and materials, architects rebuilt monuments in their original or idealized forms and, in some cases, moved them to new locations. In Spain, this approach has generally been associated with Falangist ideology. But here, as elsewhere, theories of restoration did not always correspond to particular political alignments.<sup>60</sup> Many architects of this generation sought to reestablish the lost wholeness and beauty of monuments, which they saw as exemplars that could inform contemporary architecture. And, in fact, in this same period the Islamic legacy was reappraised as an inspiration for a native Spanish modernism, articulated in the famous Alhambra Manifesto (1953). This effort was organized by Fernando Chueca Goitia (1911–2004), a towering

<sup>57</sup> "Una Exposición Hispano-Islámico," 133–4.

<sup>58</sup> Juan José Primo Jurado, ed., *Antonio Cruz Conde y Córdoba* (Córdoba: Ayuntamiento de Córdoba, 2005), 181–2.

<sup>59</sup> See Michele Lamprakos, "The Idea of the Historic City," *Change Over Time* 4 (2014): 8–38, at 12, 22.

<sup>60</sup> For a nuanced view see Julián Esteban-Chaparría, "The Conservation of Spain's Architectural Heritage: A Balance of Three Crucial Decades, 1929–1958," *Future Anterior* 5, no. 2 (Winter 2008), 34–52.

figure in Spanish architectural history, a restoration architect, and a liberal who quietly advocated removing the *crucero* and reconstructing the Mezquita.<sup>61</sup>

## The *Traslado* Controversy of 1971–73

In June 1966, King Faysal of Saudi Arabia visited Córdoba and allegedly offered \$10 million to finance *traslado* (Fig. 4.13). Around this time, several developments conspired to make the project possible: the Second Vatican Council (1962–65); Spain's Law of Religious Freedom (1967); preparatory work for the World Heritage convention (1972); and the appointment of Rafael de la Hoz Arderius as head of the General Directorate of Architecture (DGA) in 1971.<sup>62</sup> His private archive allows us to reconstruct this final reprise of the *traslado* initiative.<sup>63</sup>

An eminent architect and a modernizer, La Hoz was heir to memories of earlier generations through his father, an architect and Republican politician who had been persecuted by the Franco regime; and through his father's colleagues, including Felix Hernández, conservation architect at the Mezquita and a pivotal figure in its archaeology and history, and Rafael Castejón, self-taught archaeologist and Arabist, former Andalusian nationalist, and long-time advocate of *traslado*.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, La Hoz had served as Provincial Architect from the 1950s; he would have been privy to discus-

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61 Fernando Chueca Goitia, *Historia de la arquitectura española. Edad antigua y media* (Madrid: Editorial Dossat, 1965), 1:105–6; cited in the debate over *traslado* in *Arquitectura* 168 (December 1972): 33. For Chueca's views on the Mezquita, see his *Invariantes castizos de la arquitectura española* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Dossat, 1947), especially 37–38; for his views on the *crucero* see José Ignacio Cassar Pinazo, "Annotaciones al artículo 'Datos para la restauración de la Mezquita de Córdoba,'" *Papales de Partal* 2 (November 2004): 198–200. On Chueca's liberal politics, see Ascensión Hernández, "Guilty by Association? Chueca Goitia's Stylistic Restorations under Franco's Dictatorship," *Future Anterior* 8, no. 1 (Summer 2011), 23–25.

62 By 1972, oversight of the Mezquita had been transferred from the Directorate of Fine Arts to the DGA; Francisco Daroca Bruño, *Córdoba 1950: Rafael de la Hoz como motor de la modernidad* (Seville: Diputación Provincial de Córdoba, 2019), 110n16; S. Herrero, personal communication.

63 Until recently, the only published account was Manuel Nieto Cumplido, *La Mezquita de Córdoba y el ICOMOS* (Córdoba: Ayuntamiento de Córdoba, 1976). Cassar Pinazo, "Annotaciones," 17–44 was the first to offer a reappraisal; see also Daroca Bruño, *Córdoba 1950*, 107–24 and Herrero, *De lo original*, 223–33.

64 For a biographical sketch of Rafael de la Hoz Arderius (1926–2000), see Daroca Bruño, *Córdoba 1950*, 35–42. His father Rafael de la Hoz Saldaña (1892–1949), Municipal Architect (1924) and then Provincial Architect (from 1925), ran in the 1931 municipal elections on the Republican-Socialist ticket and signed the proclamation of the Second Republic in Córdoba. Felix Hernández (1889–1975), active at both the Mezquita and Madinat al-Zahra from the late 1920s, was appointed conservation architect for zone six of the Servicio de Defensa de Patrimonio Artístico Nacional in 1940 (Herrero, *De lo original*, 169–220). Rafael Castejón Martínez y Arizala (1893–1986), a major power broker in the cultural life of the city, was director of the Royal Academy (1957–80). He also founded *Al-Mulk*, published by the Insti-





**Fig. 4.13:** King Faysal of Saudi Arabia at the Mezquita. Photo by Framar [Francisco Martínez], 19 June 1966. Córdoba, Municipal Archive FO/A 101–11–52. Reprinted with permission of the Municipal Archive of Córdoba.

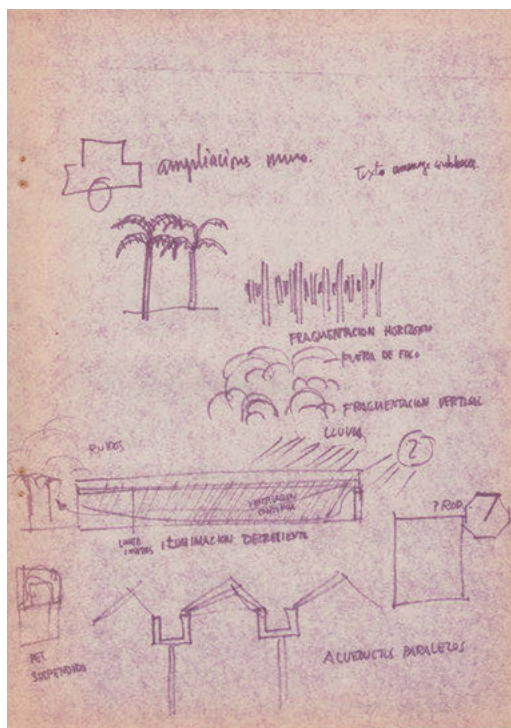
sions about *traslado* and had seen the project tabled. Now a high-level Franco appointee, he devoted his energies to realizing it.

In his notes and in correspondence with colleagues, La Hoz called the *crucero* an “outrage” and an “architectural crime” against a great building that belonged to the people of Córdoba. He sought to build a case for *traslado* that was architectural, historical, and legal. “The cathedral is not an expression of the era,” he wrote, “but rather a mistake of the era that time has not pardoned.” In other words, the *crucero* was an unauthorized and unmitigated violation that could still be prosecuted: the statute of limitations had not expired.<sup>65</sup> He dreamt of restoring “the Idea” of the original Muslim architects: those endless vistas through the forest of columns toward an indefinite, fragmented horizon; a building at one with nature, modulating light, air, and water (Fig. 4.14). For La Hoz, as for Chueca, restoring this incomparable space meant recovering a great exemplar of Spanish architecture. But it may have also symbolized some-

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tute for Caliphal Studies (1956); a modest step toward a university for Arabic and Oriental studies which Franco had promised to establish in the city, but which was never realized.

<sup>65</sup> “La catedral no es una expresión de la época sino un error de la época que no ha prescrito,” handwritten notes, late 1972, Rafael de la Hoz Arderius archive (hereafter cited as RLHA).



**Fig. 4.14:** Rafael de la Hoz Arderius, Sketches of the Mezquita, no date. Rafael de la Hoz Arderius Archive. Reprinted with permission of Rafael de la Hoz Castanys.

thing deeper: the recovery of a lost regional or local identity, reflected in the unique proportions of (mainly Islamic) buildings in Córdoba and even in the bodies of its natives.<sup>66</sup>

La Hoz developed a careful, incremental strategy, leveraging his connections and working largely behind the scenes. Publicly, he directed DGA staff to document the Mezquita, a first step toward a restoration plan. But privately, he sought to build support for *traslado* at the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS, the advisory body to UNESCO on matters of cultural heritage) and among influential architects and academics. The key was to convince ICOMOS to hold a meeting of experts in Córdoba to endorse *traslado*, thus presenting the project's opponents with a fait accompli. La Hoz's meetings with ICOMOS President Piero Gazzola in Paris in spring 1972 and subsequent correspondence with Gazzola and Antonio Alarcón Constant, Córdoba's mayor (1971–79), attest to this strategy. La Hoz must have also met with Ga-

66 La Hoz's 1973 essay "The Cordoban Proportion" was later published in Rafael de La Hoz Arderius, *La Proporción Cordobesa* (Córdoba: Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos de Córdoba, 2002), unpaginated. On this essay see Daroca Bruño, *Córdoba 1950*, 290–91.

briel Alomar Esteve, vice president of ICOMOS and president of ICOMOS-Spain, who would emerge as a key arbiter in the ensuing controversy.<sup>67</sup>

La Hoz also asked Felix Hernández to advise him on the “secularization” of the Mezquita and, in June 1972, Hernández replied with a lengthy memorandum. He had been working at the Mezquita for decades and thus had witnessed prior attempts at *traslado*. Although he seems to have opposed the concept, he nevertheless outlined aggressive interventions to restore the transparency (*diafanidad*) of the mosque.<sup>68</sup> La Hoz’s undated action plan appears to be based in part on Hernández’s memorandum. La Hoz planned to remove the plaster vaults and reconstruct the wooden ceilings, open all the arches on the patio facade, and reduce light from above (that is, coming in through the *crucero* windows). In order to make the choir transparent, he planned to remove the masonry infill and chapels between the piers; he would also remove the monumental eighteenth-century choir stalls. Having accomplished all this, he would go back to ICOMOS to ask them “to consider the possible *traslado* of the cathedral to the eastern site and the total reconstruction of the Mezquita in its original form.”<sup>69</sup>

The few surviving drawings of the *traslado* proposal were likely executed by Francisco Pons-Sorolla, director of DGA’s Cities of National Artistic Interest section and architect of several high-profile projects to relocate monumental architecture—including the long-delayed project, advocated by Velázquez, to move the choir of the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela out of the nave (1944).<sup>70</sup> These drawings include a site plan of the Mezquita and surroundings and before-and-after perspectives drawn from the south bank of the Guadalquivir River, across the Roman bridge—the emblematic view of the city that had been depicted on medieval seals (Fig. 4.15).<sup>71</sup> The *crucero* and other Christian elements would be moved to a site on the east side of the Mezquita, installed in a new structure that would act as a kind of armature for them. The *crucero* would retain its eastern orientation, with the main doors of the new cathedral opening onto the street, while gardens were projected on the north and south sides. As for the mosque, the huge gap left in the middle would be reconstructed to its tenth-century state using antique columns that had been removed in the sixteenth century. The cathedral and the mosque, now separated, would both remain visible from the Guadalquivir. “My father insisted on that location, on the eastern side, to preserve the urban profile,” recalls Rafael de la Hoz

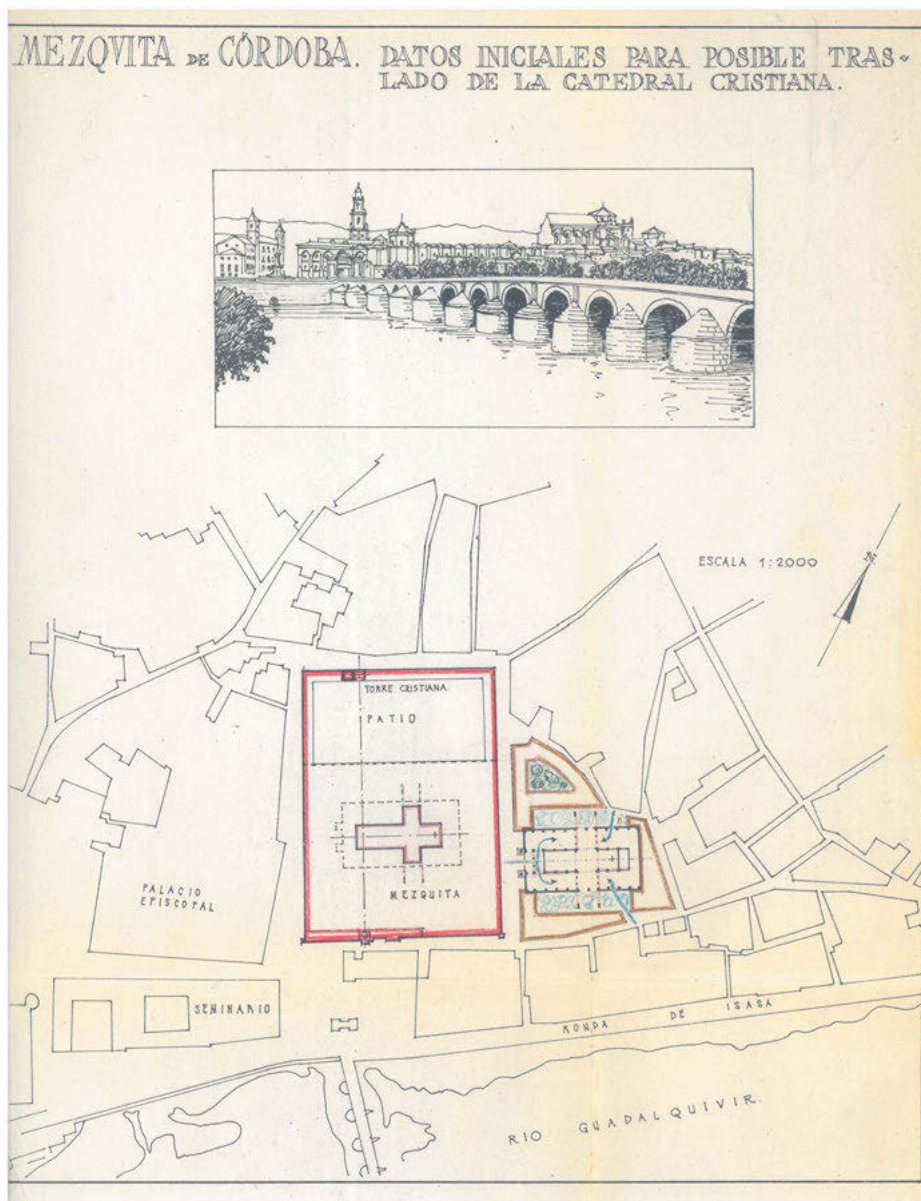
67 Various correspondence, RLHA; Cassar Pinazo, “Annotaciones,” 39–40.

68 “Memoria” 20 June 1972; Córdoba, Museo Arqueológico de Córdoba, FH 7, carpeta 1; S. Herrero, *De lo original*, 226–29.

69 “Notas para ordenar acción sobre la Mezquita de Córdoba,” RLHA.

70 Castro Fernández, *Pons-Sorolla*, 471–74.

71 The following account is based on Pons-Sorolla’s drawings and accompanying memorandum, “Datos iniciales para posible traslado de la Catedral Cristiana,” Madrid, November 1971, RLHA; later published (without drawings) as “La opinión de un miembro de ICOMOS,” *Arquitectura* 168 (December 1972): 30. This account also draws on two articles by Castejón: “La Internacionalización de la Mezquita Aljama,” *ABC Sevilla*, 13 September 1972; “Datos para la Restauración de la Mezquita de Córdoba,” *Arquitectura* 177 (September 1973): 11–17.



**Fig. 4.15:** Schematic proposal for “the possible *traslado* of the Christian cathedral,” probably by Francisco Pons-Sorolla for the Dirección General de Arquitectura, Ministerio de la Vivienda, 1972. Rafael de la Hoz Arderius Archive. Reprinted with permission of Rafael de la Hoz Castanys.

Castanys.<sup>72</sup> But the minaret-cum-bell tower would remain in its historic location and retain its seventeenth-century stone cladding, since there were too few remains to reconstruct it.<sup>73</sup>

Matters came to a head in summer 1972 when high-level officials alluded to a government-backed plan to separate the mosque and the “cathedral.”<sup>74</sup> Citing the City Council’s historical defense of the Mezquita, Córdoba’s mayor called for returning the building to its “original purity.” Then in September, Castejón published an article describing the initiative in some detail and noting that ICOMOS experts would study it in situ in October.<sup>75</sup> This ignited a firestorm of controversy, which in turn set off alarm bells at ICOMOS. Some Church authorities had been amenable to *traslado* “as long as it does not affect revenues,” even discussing alternate sites for the new cathedral. But now they began to resist it.<sup>76</sup> The most strident opposition, however, came from independent cultural academies. For these critics, the project represented an outdated approach to restoration, contravening the Athens and Venice charters; reconstructing the missing parts of the mosque could only result in historical “pastiche.”<sup>77</sup> Representatives of the academies wrote to Alomar and La Hoz, wanting to know if the DGA was in fact pursuing *traslado* and, if that were the case, if ICOMOS had already endorsed it. One eminent art historian expressed indignation that foreigners were dictating terms to Spain.<sup>78</sup>

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72 Interview, May 2017. Perhaps because of the vast demolition that would be required at this location (an archaeological site with Umayyad remains), Castejón proposed a different site to the northwest of the Mezquita where a former convent, San Pedro Alcántara, had recently been demolished; “Internacionalización”; Daroca Bruño, *Córdoba 1950*, 108–9.

73 Pons-Sorolla, “Datos Iniciales.”

74 Minister of Housing Vicente Mortes Alfonso (La Hoz’s superior), at a press conference in Córdoba in June; La Hoz in meetings with cathedral and city officials in late July. See Francisco Navarro Calapig, “Revalorización de la Mezquita,” *Diario Córdoba*, 29 July 1972; “Visita del Director General de Arquitectura” *Diario Córdoba*, 23 July 1972; José María Cirarda Lachiondo (bishop of Córdoba, 1971–78), *Recuerdos y Memorias* (Madrid: PPC, 2011), 285–6. “Cathedral” is cited from a statement by Mayor Constant, Archivo Municipal de Córdoba (hereafter cited as AM), Libro de Actas Capitulares, 31 July 1972, SF/L – 739.

75 Castejón, “Internacionalización.” For the mayor’s statement, see previous note. In March, the City Council had moved to nominate the Mezquita as an “international monument”; 17 March 1972, AM, Libro de Actas Capitulares, SF/L – 738.

76 On 17 November 1971, Juan J. Rueda Serrano, Provincial Delegate of the Ministry of Housing, reported on the Church authorities’ interest. Following meetings with La Hoz in July 1972, they changed course, demanding the right to review and approve any work; Secretary of the Cathedral Chapter to La Hoz, 26 July 1972 (both RLHA).

77 Dionisio Ortiz Juárez, “El incierto futuro del crucero de la Catedral,” *Diario Córdoba*, 29 September 1972.

78 “One of the reasons for this indignation . . . [is the] interference of UNESCO”; José Camón Aznar to Alomar, 9 November 1972, RLHA. Camón Aznar was a member of several Royal Academies, including Fine Arts and History.

Gabriel Alomar sought to mollify the academies while quietly pressuring La Hoz to call off the project.<sup>79</sup> In November he addressed a special session of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, the body historically charged with protection of heritage. He assured members that the purpose of the upcoming ICOMOS meeting was *not* to endorse *traslado*, but rather to develop criteria for the conservation of monuments throughout the world where different cultures and styles have been “superimposed.” The idea of “separating the mosque and ‘the *crucero*,” however, was again on the table and definitive action must be taken to stop it. “For those of us who believe that this would be an immense error,” he said, “should we not say no, once and for all—in a form so well documented that it cuts off future recurrences of the idea?”<sup>80</sup>

In the end, the ICOMOS meeting was delayed and its agenda quietly reconceived to address the special situation of monuments “belonging to different cultures.”<sup>81</sup> At the final session, held at the Mezquita on 1 May 1973, the experts unanimously agreed that *all* layers of the building should be conserved in accordance with international norms. Their joint document, the “Córdoba Resolution,” emphasized the “enormous interest [of] such masterworks . . . for human consciousness” in the twentieth century. Not only were they artistically unique, but also served as symbols of reconciliation: “overcoming conflicts and rivalries of the past.” The Mosque-Cathedral of Córdoba, they concluded, “contains an exceptional expression of the meeting and superimposition of Christianity and Islam.”<sup>82</sup>

Some advocates of *traslado* described it as a gesture of universal understanding, akin to Atatürk’s transformation of the Hagia Sophia into a museum.<sup>83</sup> Separating the mosque and the cathedral would announce a historic reconciliation between the two faiths, transforming Córdoba into a beacon of hope in the postwar world. But the Córdoba Resolution turned that argument on its head: it was the “*superimposition* of Christianity and Islam” in a single monument that allegedly symbolized “overcoming conflicts and rivalries of the past.” Transforming the mosque-cathedral into a symbol of “cultural pluralism,” however, required dehistoricizing and depoliticizing the *crucero*—and the way to do that was through architecture. As Alomar said at the ICOMOS meeting:

The construction of a great nave in the interior of the mosque cannot be interpreted as a *damnatio memoriae* against Islam, nor does it obey religious motives. Rather it was an idea of the time, which required the creation of a large and light-filled space, opposed to that which moved the Islamic builders. *It is only a problem of architectural conception.*<sup>84</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Alomar was providing blind copies of some correspondence to La Hoz; RLHA.

<sup>80</sup> “Informe sobre la Mezquita de Córdoba,” 20 November 1972, RLHA.

<sup>81</sup> Gazzola wrote this in a letter to Mayor Alarcón on 6 December 1972; it was published in *Diario Córdoba*, 12 December 1972.

<sup>82</sup> Excerpted in Nieto, *La Mezquita de Córdoba y el ICOMOS*, 53–54.

<sup>83</sup> For example, Castejón, “Internacionalización.”

<sup>84</sup> Gabriel Alomar quoted by Dionisio Ortiz Juárez, “El Triunfo de Hernán Ruiz I y su calumniado crucero de la Catedral de Córdoba,” *ABC Sevilla*, 15 May 1973, 26–27 (emphasis mine).

## Rehabilitating the “Much-Maligned *Crucero*”

In the years leading up to and following Franco's death in 1975, the Mezquita became a stage for performing interfaith dialogue, and attempts were made to erase *traslado* from the historical record. Indeed, even during and immediately following the controversy, key actors sought to cover it up, insisting that the project to separate the mosque and the cathedral “in reality has never existed.”<sup>85</sup> But the idea was still discussed behind the scenes—part of a massive project to turn Córdoba into a kind of museum-city of Arab-Islamic civilization.<sup>86</sup> Financed by Arab states and brokered by UNESCO, the initiative ultimately died, like so many projects before and after that sought to highlight the city's Islamic heritage. Ultimately *traslado*, too, was abandoned, and opposition from some in the Church and cultural establishment was not the only reason. Spain had recently emerged from its long isolation and actors there were conscious of scrutiny in international arenas like ICOMOS. Nevertheless, *traslado* had broad support. “The Church had nothing to lose,” recalled Mayor Alarcón, “because the cathedral was going to be next door, just as splendid.”<sup>87</sup> In fact, observers recall that the main obstacle was technical: the intricate interweaving of mosque and *crucero* made it difficult, if not impossible, to separate them.<sup>88</sup>

By the early 1980s the century-long project to re-Islamicize the Mezquita was more or less complete. Four arches on the patio facade had been opened and infilled with abstract, Islamic-inspired latticework, while plaster vaults had been removed in the western part of the building, replaced by plain wooden ceilings. But the vaults were retained in the eastern part—a decision that signaled a broader shift in policy. Echoing the recommendations of the 1973 ICOMOS meeting, a new restoration plan by Rafael Moneo Vallés and Gabriel Ruiz Cabrero argued that it was necessary “to accept the Mosque of Córdoba as and how it has arrived to our days, coming to terms with its rich and complex history.” The Islamic structure, they maintained, was “capable of assimilating numerous and varied interventions without losing its integrity.”<sup>89</sup> A year later, in 1985, a series of articles in *Arquitectura* (the same journal that had hosted a

85 Gabriel Alomar, “Coloquio Internacional del ‘Concejo Internacional de Monumentos y Sitios’ . . . Informe,” 6 May 1973, report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Camón Aznar to La Hoz, 17 October 1972 (both RLHA).

86 La Hoz was also involved in this initiative. See Francisco Solano, “Antonio Alarcón intentó hacer realidad una oferta árabe de mil millones de dólares,” *Diario Córdoba*, 10 February 1981, 25, 28; La Hoz, “Evocación de la Mezquita Mayor de Córdoba” transmitted on 1 January 1981 to Pablo Bravo Lzano, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with copy to Cecilio Valverde Mazuelas, President of the Senate.

87 Interview with Rosa Luque, “Cuando se frustró el plan de separar la Catedral y la Mezquita,” *Diario Córdoba*, 14 November 2010.

88 A high-ranking official reported this to the author. See also Rafael Moneo Vallés, “La Vida de los Edificios,” *Arquitectura* 256 (1985): 26–36, at 36n22.

89 “Proyecto de restauración de la Mezquita-Catedral de Córdoba” of 1984, cited in Herrero, *De lo original*, 257.

debate on *traslado* in 1972) consecrated the new attitude: Moneo and others argued that the Christian transformations had kept the building alive.<sup>90</sup> After a century of vilification, it seemed that the “much-maligned *crucero*” had been rehabilitated.<sup>91</sup> But, in fact, dissension persisted. When the “Great Mosque of Cordoba” was finally added to the World Heritage list in 1984, it was celebrated *not* for cultural pluralism but rather for its attributes as a mosque. The nomination dossier (prepared by the new Andalusian regional government and the General Directorate of Fine Arts) recognized no value in the Christian layers—and even repeated Charles V’s legendary condemnation.<sup>92</sup>

Few today (including this author) would advocate removal of the *crucero*. But the debate of the 1970s sheds light on deeper conflicts at a key moment in Spanish history: the transition from dictatorship to democracy. On the surface, the debate was about correct restoration practice, in particular how to approach monuments “belonging to different cultures.” But on a deeper level it was about the role of the Islamic legacy in Spain. The Córdoba Resolution and the architectural discourse that evolved from it, erased or sublimated the deep conflicts that had surrounded the construction of the *crucero*—conflicts that constitute one of the monument’s most important stories. It also erased modern conflicts, defusing the emotional and ideological charge that the Mezquita had held for recent generations. For the *traslado* project of the 1970s was a covert reprise of wider, pre-Civil War debates: is the Islamic heritage a living part of who we are, as Spaniards? Or is it a beautiful stage that has been surpassed, an “exotic” that never took root in Spanish soil?<sup>93</sup>

A coalition of conservative academics and church officials finally defeated *traslado*, this time deploying the new international discourses of heritage and ecumenicism. At the cusp of a political transition that would likely restrict Church privileges, they managed to preserve both the great symbol of Reconquista and one of the biggest sources of tourist revenues in the country—revenues that were sure to skyrocket with World Heritage designation. In the coming decades, however, Church authorities would reject ecumenicism to the point of discrediting and even denying the Mezquita’s Islamic history. But that is another story.

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90 Moneo, “La Vida de los Edificios,” 27–36; Antón Capitel, “La Catedral de Córdoba: transformación cristiana de la Mezquita,” 37–46. Ruiz Cabrero was now editor of *Arquitectura*. On the debate in the December 1972 issue see Cassar Pinazo, “Annotaciones,” 18–20.

91 Ortiz Juárez, “El Triunfo de Hernán Ruiz I,” 26–27.

92 “The Mosque of Cordoba,” 30 December 1983 (revised 9 May 1984), Paris, UNESCO Archives, CLT/WHC/NOM 135.

93 The latter idea was expressed by Washington Irving in *The Alhambra* (1832), where he wrote: “The Moslem empire was but an exotic that took no permanent root in the soil it embellished.” Irving’s text was excerpted as a preface to the English edition of Moneo’s article, “The Mosque and the Cathedral,” *FMR* 7, no. 33 (July-August 1988): 98–99.



Francisco J. Moreno Martín

# Medieval Spanish Castles: The Glory of the Past and the Construction of Race during Franco's Regime

In 1949, ten years after the end of the Civil War, Francisco Franco, the dictator who ruled Spain from 1939 to 1975, signed a national decree for the protection of approximately two thousand Spanish castles. According to the official text, these monuments were to be preserved as they had been “in their most glorious epochs.” In its view, historic preservation was not only an architectural duty, however; it was a moral obligation aimed at maintaining the “spiritual values of the race” (*valores espirituales de la raza*).<sup>1</sup>

This essay contextualizes the 1949 protection decree as a central decision of Franco's regime that affected, at least theoretically, the conservation of many fortresses across the country but especially in Al-Andalus. To understand the full meaning of the modern afterlife of these fortifications and the contradiction inherent in this decree, it is crucial to remember that many castles had been built in the area of the Iberian Peninsula that was under Muslim rule from 711 to the fall of Granada in 1492. Specifically, I focus on the way the decree helped to direct public attention toward an image of the Spanish medieval past closely linked to the so-called Christian Reconquista (“reconquest”).<sup>2</sup> At its conclusion, the essay considers how the presentation of the castles—restored with government sponsorship—as the essence of Spanish medieval Christianity coincided with the development of national and international tourism.

## Francoism and the Appropriation of the Medieval Past

After almost three years of Civil War (1936–39), conceived as a “crusade” against communism, a medievalizing rhetoric had become common currency in the government of the dictator Franco.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, it is easy to understand why words

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1 Francisco Franco, “Ministerio de Educación Nacional: Decreto de 22 de abril de 1949 sobre protección de los castillos españoles,” *Boletín Oficial del Estado* 125 (1949): 2058–59.

2 See 87n3 in this volume (Lamprakos) for recent literature that problematizes this concept.

3 Francisco J. Moreno Martín, “*Gesta dei per Hispanos*: Invención, visualización e imposición del mito de Cruzada durante la Guerra Civil y el primer franquismo,” in *La Reconquista: Ideología y justificación de la Guerra Santa Peninsular*, ed. Carlos de Ayala, Isabel Cristina Ferreira, and Santiago Palacios (Madrid: La Ergastula, 2019), 483–532; M. Pilar García Cuetos, “La restauración en la España del Nacionalcatolicismo. Caudillaje, Cruzada,” in *Art i Memòria. XVII Congreso Nacional de Historia del Arte, Barcelona, 2008* (Barcelona: Universidad de Barcelona, 2012), 528–42, at 530–31.

such as “race,” “homeland,” and “glory” were used in the decree enacted in 1949 to protect Spanish fortresses. The presence of these terms explains why recent historiography has considered this law as propaganda, part of a state strategy aimed at using castles built during the medieval Reconquista to support a reinvigorated Catholic national discourse rooted in the historical destiny of Spain.<sup>4</sup> Although a national Catholic ideology had already emerged in the nineteenth century, it was only in the early years of the dictatorship that it was officially enforced and considered unquestionable. This ideology tended to fix on tangible material references; according to this reading, medieval castles had helped Christian armies to recover the territory “invaded” by the Muslims.

The damage these structures suffered during the conflict that resulted from the resistance of Spanish Republicans to Franco’s coup d’état was generally minor. While the Civil War proved devastating for some cities, the rural areas remained largely untouched because they were removed from military action.<sup>5</sup> It therefore was problematic to present the dictator as the savior of glorious ruins since they never were the target of Republican attacks (something they had in common with other monuments and works of art said to have been “miraculously” recovered by Franco’s actions).<sup>6</sup> The majority of the more than two thousand castles counted in Franco’s census had been long abandoned; before the Civil War, only 150 had been declared “historic and artistic monuments,” an official designation that secured the highest level of protection.<sup>7</sup> Sometime later, however, the castles provided a new opportunity to support Franco’s role as the leader of the new state. As if in a medieval tale, he is said to have signed the decree for the protection of all Spanish castles after seeing the ruined

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4 Javier Rivera, “Consideración y fortuna del patrimonio tras la guerra civil, destrucción y reconstrucción del patrimonio histórico (1936–1956): La restauración monumental,” in *Bajo el signo de la Victoria: La conservación del patrimonio durante el primer franquismo (1936–1958)*, ed. José I. Casar and Julián Esteban (Valencia: Pentagraf, 2008), 85–109, at 95; Gonzalo López-Muñiz, “El inventario de castillos de España (1949–1960): Una fuente documental para el conocimiento de la historia y restauración de fortificaciones durante el franquismo,” *Cuadernos de Arquitectura y Fortificación* 4 (2017): 159–80, at 160; Esther Almarcha and Rafael Villena, “Una nación de castillos: Su restauración, imagen fotográfica y significado en el segundo franquismo,” *Vínculos de Historia* 11 (2022): 189–212, at 190.

5 Esther Almarcha and Rafael Villena, “Los castillos ¿destino turístico?,” in *De Marco Polo al low cost*, ed. Héctor Martínez and María Rubio (Madrid: Catarata, 2020): 69–90, at 76.

6 Julián Esteban, “El primer franquismo ¿La ruptura de un proceso en la intervención sobre el Patrimonio?,” in Casar and Esteban, *Bajo el signo* (Valencia: Pentagraf, 2008): 21–70, at 36.

7 [Asociación Española de Amigos de los Castillos] (hereafter cited as AEAC), “Editorial,” *Boletín de la Asociación Española de Amigos de los Castillos* 2 (1953): 47–48, at 48 (hereafter cited as BAEAC); [AEAC], “El decreto de 22 de abril de 1949 y sus consecuencias para los castillos españoles,” *BAEAC* 2 (1953): 60–63, at 60.

shape of a castle during a hunting trip.<sup>8</sup> Presented by the Minister of National Education, José Ibáñez Martín, the decree seems to have been written by the Director General of Fine Arts, the Marquis of Lozoya, an art historian—and fascist politician—who played a crucial role in the events recounted here.<sup>9</sup>

The decree very clearly attempted to connect the ruins (or semiruin) with the glorious history of the Spanish homeland: the castles were presented as a metaphor of the spirit of the “Spanish race” and, as such, they deserved protection by the state. One of the decree’s provisions created the post of Architect Curator of Castles, while another instructed the General Directorate of Fine Arts to begin drawing up an index of Spanish castles.<sup>10</sup> Thanks to having instituted this law, the dictator would, a few years later, be celebrated as a fighter “for hearth and home” (*pro aris et focis*) against the enemies of patriotic traditions.<sup>11</sup> Medieval past and twentieth-century present were thus fused, generating an intentionally ambiguous discourse. This discourse, however, was not invented by the dictator; the idea of justifying an authoritarian government by using medieval rulers as a comparison was common in intellectual circles surrounding Franco. One example is the publication by the Marquis of Lozoya on the Catholic monarchs, Isabella and Ferdinand, which presented them as a royal couple that had to fight against oligarchies, separatism, and the erosion of the Catholic faith, much like Franco himself.<sup>12</sup>

One of the forms the public appropriation of the past took was the organization of huge ceremonies based on rituals excavated from history books.<sup>13</sup> The Victory Parade of Madrid in 1939 celebrating the triumph of the Spanish nationalists, for example, was full of references to the Middle Ages. It even included the use of actual medieval relics brought from cities such as Oviedo and of antiphons taken from early medieval liturgical codices.<sup>14</sup> Another strategy to connect Franco’s dictatorship with the most glorious moments of Spain’s history was the creation of an “imperial style” implemented by ar-

8 Leonardo Villena, “Cincuenta años de la Asociación de Amigos de los Castillos,” *Castillos de España* 129 (2003), 27–36, at 34; Pablo Schnell, “El inventario de arquitectura defensiva de la AEAC, un ejemplo de ciencia ciudadana en España,” *Patrimonio Cultural de España* 9 (2014): 81–94, at 83.

9 Gabriel Alomar, “El Marqués de Lozoya y la conservación de los castillos españoles,” in *El Marqués de Lozoya, Grande de España* (Madrid: Centro segoviano de Madrid, 1976), 75–78.

10 Franco, “Decreto,” 2058.

11 [AEAC], “Entrega a su Excelencia el Jefe del Estado de la primera Medalla creada por la Asociación Española de Amigos de los Castillos,” *BAEAC* 25 (1959): 73–80, at 80.

12 Marqués de Lozoya, *Los orígenes del Imperio: La España de Fernando e Isabel* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1939), 7–12; discussed in Giuliana Di Febo, *Ritos de guerra y de victoria en la España franquista* (Bilbao: Desclée de Brouwer, 2002).

13 Gustavo Alares, *Políticas del pasado en la España franquista (1939–1964): Historia, nacionalismo y dictadura* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2017).

14 Di Febo, *Ritos de guerra*, 112; Carmen J. Gutiérrez, “Francisco Franco y los reyes godos: La legitimación del poder usurpado por medio de la ceremonia y la música,” *Cuadernos de música iberoamericana* 33 (2020): 161–95.

chitects loyal to the regime.<sup>15</sup> The restoration of monuments likewise was used to emphasize great epochs of Spain's past. This explains why, immediately after the end of the war, some castles were not just restored but entirely rebuilt. The most significant is the medieval fortress of La Mota in Medina del Campo (Valladolid), which was completely remodeled between 1939 and 1942 to house the Women's Section of the fascist Spanish Falange party. The project involved the rebuilding of old walls and the insertion of new ones, the installation of neo-medieval furniture, and the construction of a neo-Gothic facade copied after the Hospital de La Latina in Madrid (Fig. 5.1).<sup>16</sup> The



**Fig. 5.1:** Postage stamp with the image of Franco and the castle of La Mota in Medina del Campo, 1948. Photo: Wikimedia Commons (public domain).

<sup>15</sup> Carlota Bustos, "Muguruza en la arquitectura española," in *Pedro Muguruza Otaño (1893–1952): Arquitecto y académico*, ed. Enrique Castaño Perea and Carlota Bustos Juez, Supplement [Anexo], *Academia: Boletín de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando* 2 (2015), 27–46, at 41; Dirección General de Regiones Devastadas, "Exposición de la Reconstrucción de España," *Reconstrucción* 3 (1940): 1–60, at 10.

<sup>16</sup> Miguel Lasso de la Vega, "Pedro Muguruza: ¿La voz de Franco en la arquitectura?," in Castaño Perea and Bustos Juez, *Pedro Muguruza Otaño*, 205–16, at 208; María Rosón, *Género, memoria y cultura visual en el primer franquismo* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2016); Alex Garrís, "La reconstrucción de la arquitectura militar como imagen del régimen franquista," in *Art i Memòria*, 576–90, at 580.

postage stamp is one among hundreds of examples of cheap, mass-produced visual formats (stamps, lottery tickets, calendars, and the like) that were pressed into service to promote the regime's cultural undertakings. Other examples of fortresses rebuilt to house institutions linked to the fascist state include the castles of Las Navas del Marqués (Ávila), San Servando (Toledo), and Coca (Segovia).<sup>17</sup>

In short, the law for the protection of Spanish castles was integral to the propaganda machinery of a dictatorship that habitually looked at itself in the distorted mirror of the past. That said, the 1949 decree pursued two objectives that were in reality very difficult to achieve in a context of deep crisis: the conservation and the documentation of thousands of fortresses spread throughout the Spanish territory. Two questions arise: Were these goals actually achieved, and what were the implications of this attempt for a modern use of the medieval heritage?

## The Real Impact of the Protection Decree: Conservation versus Reconstruction

Soon after the signing of the decree, the propaganda services of Franco's regime developed a strategy to publicize it. In April 1949, an exhibition was organized in Madrid under the title *Castillos en España* (Castles in Spain).<sup>18</sup> Later that same year, the Castle Conservation Service was founded with an architect appointed from within the Ministry of National Education as its head. The main function of this new administrative entity was to develop an overall plan for conservation and restoration work; additionally, it was to draw up a catalogue of all castles found in Spain, complete with plans and photographs.<sup>19</sup> Direct interventions in the fabric of the fortresses themselves were limited due to the lack of financial resources. In the first eight years of its existence, this agency had a total of eight million pesetas at its disposal.<sup>20</sup> To put this figure in perspective, the amount invested in the conservation of the mosque of Córdoba between 1939 and 1959 alone was more than two million pesetas.<sup>21</sup> In most cases, the shortage of funding meant that all that could be done was emergency work to consolidate ruined walls. If we consider that, by 1958, the number of architectural interven-

17 Luis M. Feduchi and José M.G. Valcárcel, "Escuela Nacional de instructoras Isabel la Católica en el castillo de Las Navas," *Revista Nacional de Arquitectura* 122 (1952): 7–13; [AEAC], "Editorial," *BAEAC* 26 (1959): 135–40, at 137; Garrís, "La reconstrucción de la arquitectura," 583.

18 Pedro Muguruza, "El Palacio de Don Juan II, en Madrigal de las Altas Torres," *Revista Nacional de Arquitectura* 91 (1949): 283–91.

19 [AEAC], "El decreto de 22 de abril," 60.

20 Casto Fernández-Shaw, "Un programa para la conservación de los castillos españoles," *BAEAC* 17 (1957), 46–57, at 49.

21 Antonio Gallego Burín et al., eds., *Veinte años de Restauración Monumental en España: Catálogo de la Exposición* (Madrid: Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 1958), 28.

tions amounted to sixty-five, then it is obvious that the goal of preserving the more than two thousand catalogued castles was impossible to reach.<sup>22</sup>

From the current perspective of preventive conservation, however, one must be grateful that even a small number of projects was executed. In 1946, Leopoldo Torres Balbás, the architect who introduced the principles of the Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments (1931) to Spain, pointed out the problem with castle renovations that sought to “leave them as new.”<sup>23</sup> In order to understand Balbás’s critique of existing approaches, it is useful to go back a few years, to the period of the Civil War. Before the conflict, the only institution that managed the Spanish built heritage and so controlled restorations across the country was the General Directorate of Fine Arts.<sup>24</sup> During the war, a small group of fascist intellectuals linked to Franco created its own organization: the Service for the Defense of the National Artistic Heritage. Although it was intended for the protection of all types of artworks and buildings, this organization was especially oriented toward the recovery of Spanish church properties.<sup>25</sup> Its first commissioner was Pedro Muguruza, a Catholic architect who rescued from ruin the cathedral of Sigüenza (Guadalajara), presented as the most important building of “Medieval Spain,” the perceived “real” Spain.<sup>26</sup> After the defeat of the Republic, the Service was absorbed by the Directorate of Fine Arts. Its director at the time was the Marquis of Lozoya, the ultra-Catholic politician who would some years later draft the decree for the protection of castles.<sup>27</sup> In short, the Spanish institutions that supervised the official restoration of the monuments after the war were conditioned by their affiliation with both the fascist government and the Catholic Church.

In 1940, these two existing arts organizations were joined by a new and much more politicized administrative entity: the General Directorate of Devastated Regions (Dirección General de Regiones Devastadas hereafter DGRD), which reported directly to the Ministry of the Interior.<sup>28</sup> When a monument, and especially a church, was located within an area controlled by the DGRD it fell under its authority rather than that of the Directorate of Fine Arts. In 1941, a total of 106 architects were working for this agency; some of them would go on to direct restoration projects according to the methods they acquired while working for the DGRD. Predictably, most of the human and economic resources that the state freed for the architectural reconstructions

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<sup>22</sup> Gallego Burín, *Veinte años*, 47.

<sup>23</sup> Ascensión Hernández, “Algunas reflexiones en torno a la restauración monumental en la España de posguerra: Rupturas y continuidades,” in *Historia, restauración y reconstrucción monumental en la posguerra española*, ed. M. Pilar García, Esther Almarcha, and Ascensión Hernández (Madrid: Abada, 2012), 97–132, at 105.

<sup>24</sup> Esteban, “El primer franquismo,” 43.

<sup>25</sup> Esteban, “El primer franquismo,” 37.

<sup>26</sup> Marqués de Lozoya, “La conservación de los monumentos nacionales durante la guerra,” *Revista Nacional de Arquitectura* 1 (1941): 14–16, at 16.

<sup>27</sup> Esteban, “El primer franquismo,” 23.

<sup>28</sup> Rivera, “Consideración y fortuna del patrimonio,” 91.

were funneled into this organization.<sup>29</sup> The DGRD's overall mandate was to "rebuild" (*reconstruir*) the villages destroyed during the war and to exploit this kind of activity to create propaganda for the new state. Numerous newly designed villages and neighborhoods were built following an idealized pattern (which never existed historically), one that featured a central square with a church and individual houses, the latter intended to discourage political relations among the population. Some of these reconstructed places were deeply connected to the Christian Middle Ages (one thinks of Covadonga, the site where the Reconquista had started) or the Hapsburg imperial past (such as the Alcázar of Toledo).<sup>30</sup>

The castle of Maqueda, built in the fifteenth century in what is now the province of Toledo, offers a representative example of how the DGRD approached its work. The castle was completely refashioned under its auspices to house a barracks for the partially militarized police force, the Guardia Civil (Fig. 5.2).<sup>31</sup> Although none of the reconstruction is perceptible from the outside, the interior was completely emptied and a modern building erected. One of the ruined medieval towers was entirely rebuilt and a water tank of reinforced concrete placed inside it. Given the propagandistic intent of the rebuilding, it is unsurprising that no archaeological survey was carried out.<sup>32</sup>

In 1953, four years after the approval of the decree protecting Spanish castles, a new development took place with the foundation of the Spanish Association of Friends of the Castles (*Asociación Española de Amigos de los Castillos* or AEAC). This voluntary organization declared itself to be a loyal servant of Franco, whom it named Honorary President (Fig. 5.3). Its first board of directors included the Marquis of Lozoya and Germán Valentín Gamazo, who had previously been appointed Architect Curator of Castles and had begun his relationship with the regime as an architect of the DGRD.<sup>33</sup> Among the main objectives of this new organization was to promote awareness of the historical value of the monuments and the need for their proper conservation. To this end, the AEAC published a journal featuring not only articles and news but also proposing activities such as exhibitions and excursions. Another task it took on was to collaborate with the Castle Conservation Service on the inventory of Spanish castles.<sup>34</sup> This task was passed on directly to town councils and local institutions, which were required to report on the location and condition of the castles situated in their territory. By 1968, after almost twenty years of effort

<sup>29</sup> Esteban, "El primer franquismo," 43.

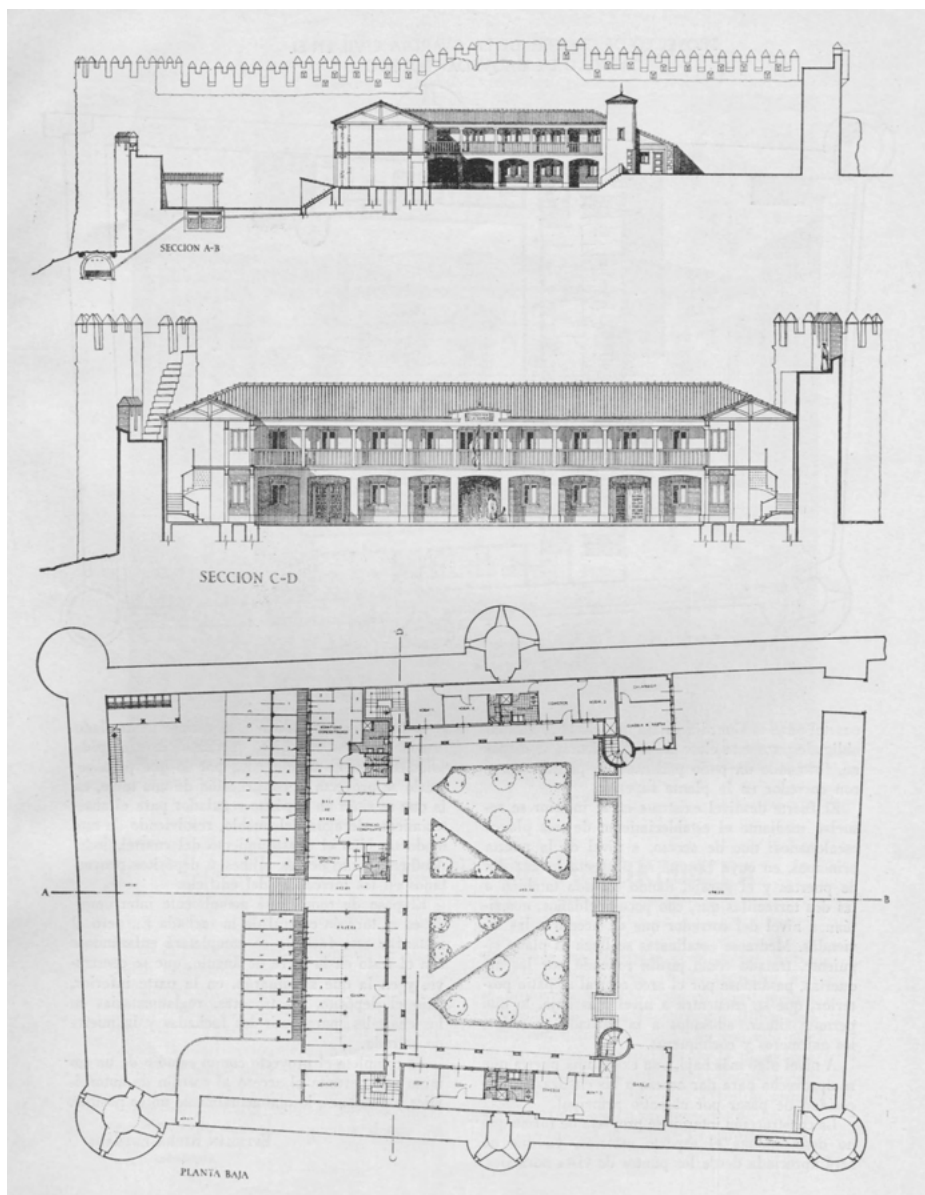
<sup>30</sup> Rivera, "Consideración y fortuna del patrimonio," 97; Esteban Riera, "Proyecto de cuartel de la guardia civil en el castillo de Maqueda," *Reconstrucción* 82 (1948): 128–34.

<sup>31</sup> Esteban Riera, "Cuartel para la guardia civil construido por la Dirección General de Regiones Devastadas, en Maqueda, Toledo," *Reconstrucción* 116 (1953): 59–66.

<sup>32</sup> Riera, "Cuartel para la guardia civil," 116.

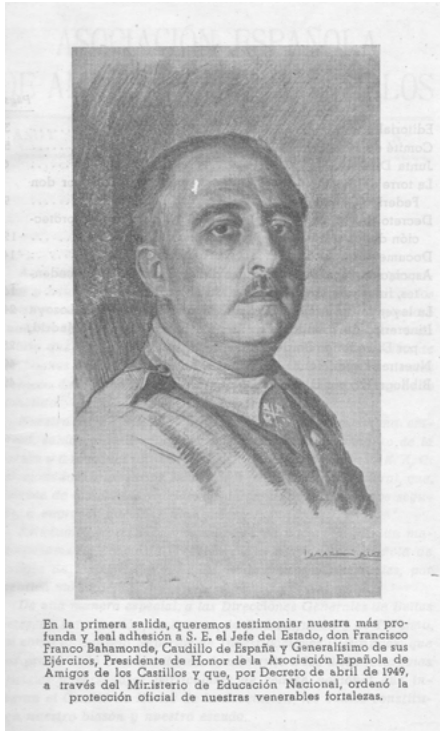
<sup>33</sup> Esteban, "El primer franquismo," 44.

<sup>34</sup> [AEAC], "Editorial," 47.



**Fig. 5.2:** Maqueda, Castle, reconstruction project, 1948. Photo from Riera, “Proyecto de cuartel.”.





**Fig. 5.3:** Francisco Franco as Honorary President of the AEAC. Photo from *BAEAC* 1 (1953).

and despite having very few resources, the AEAC had registered a total of 5220 examples of “military architecture.”<sup>35</sup>

But what were the links between this association and dictator Franco? In the first thirteen years of the AEAC’s existence, its board of directors was received in Franco’s official residence on three occasions to celebrate the special ties that united them. The first was in 1953, when Franco was appointed as the association’s Honorary President in recognition of his role as “savior of the history of Spain.”<sup>36</sup> Six years later, the AEAC bestowed on the dictator a medal that honored him as the first protector of Spanish castles.<sup>37</sup> Finally, in 1966, Franco met with the association to be informed about exhibitions on the castles of Spain planned for other European countries and the United States.<sup>38</sup> It would be unfair not to recognize the work of the AEAC in the promotion of

<sup>35</sup> Alejandro Carrión, *Plan Nacional de Arquitectura Defensiva* (Madrid, Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, 2015), 6; López-Muñiz, “El inventario de castillos,” 171.

<sup>36</sup> [AEAC], “Visita de la Junta Directiva de la Asociación Española de Amigos de los Castillos a S. E. El Jefe del Estado,” *BAEAC* 3 (1953): 81.

<sup>37</sup> [AEAC], “Entrega a su Excelencia,” 73.

<sup>38</sup> [AEAC], “Audiencia concedida por el Jefe del Estado y Presidente de Honor de nuestra Asociación,” *BAEAC* 52 (1966): 103–08, at 81.

Spain's monumental heritage, particularly in the area of defensive architecture. It is obvious, however, that the organization's birth was directly related to the dictatorship's intention to present castles as a reflection of the national and Catholic spirit of the Spanish nation. That is not surprising when considering that the public to whom the AEAC's publications and activities were directed was of a high social class and an intelligentsia ideologically aligned with the regime.

## The Origins of Spanish Fortifications: Between a “Spanish Race” and an Islamic Past

The 1949 decree for the protection of castles was a legislative text that intentionally used the rhetoric of propaganda to oppose academic histories dealing with the Spanish Middle Ages. When that law spoke of the “spiritual values of our race,” it deliberately ignored the Islamic presence in Iberia.<sup>39</sup> But while fascist politicians and the population that supported the dictatorship may have believed in the spiritual and racial purity promoted by this ultranationalist discourse, the historical record tells a different story.

As is true for other European countries, it was during the nineteenth century that Spain developed a national history. While the role of Al-Andalus in this story could not be ignored, ultra-Catholic historians saw the peninsula's Muslim past as proof of the existence of an enemy against which the Spanish had forged their national unity. As a result, the almost eight centuries of Islamic presence were considered an “accident” caused by the “invasion” in 711. The Reconquista, understood as an uninterrupted struggle stretching from then until 1492, helped to create a sense of collective identity and to close a wound caused by a foreign occupation.<sup>40</sup>

This anti-Islamic conception of Spanish medieval history came in another, more moderate version, which tried to minimize the contribution of Islamic culture by subsuming it to a more powerful late Roman indigenous culture. Thus, when Al-Andalus reached its political, cultural, and artistic peak in the tenth century, it was considered a success achieved by a majority Hispanic population intermixed with an Arab minority.<sup>41</sup> Nineteenth-century historiography used the term “Islamic Spain” in an attempt to describe this situation, but that concept was anachronistic; no Spanish nation, ei-

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<sup>39</sup> Alejandro García Sanjuán, “Al-Andalus en el nacionalcatolicismo español: La historiografía de época franquista (1939–1960),” in *El franquismo y la apropiación del pasado: El uso de la historia, de la arqueología y de la historia del arte para la legitimación de la dictadura*, ed. Francisco J. Moreno Martín (Madrid: Fundación Pablo Iglesias, 2016), 189–208, at 206–7.

<sup>40</sup> García Sanjuán, “Al-Andalus en el nacionalcatolicismo,” 195–96.

<sup>41</sup> García Sanjuán, “Al-Andalus en el nacionalcatolicismo,” 204.

ther Islamic or Christian, existed in the Middle Ages.<sup>42</sup> Still, this imagined Hispano-Arabic arcadia had the merit of acknowledging the positive contribution of Islamic culture, at least once it had been included with and accepted into the Spanish matrix. To demonstrate Islamic and Christian coexistence, it was common to present the beautiful Andalusian monuments as unique and unrepeatable. As a result, the mosque of Córdoba or the Alhambra of Granada were celebrated as hybrid products in what was otherwise an ocean of Spanish culture with a few drops of “oriental” influence.<sup>43</sup>

It is in the context of assessing the Islamic presence in the Iberian Peninsula during the Middle Ages that the Marquis of Lozoya’s ideas about the restoration of fortifications should be seen. He argued that the emirate of Córdoba (756–929) was simply a government in which an Arab minority had subdued Spaniards of the south and that it was only with the rise to power of ‘Abd al-Rahman III and the proclamation of the Umayyad caliphate in 929 that an authentic “Spanish state” was formed. What made the Umayyad caliphate such a state was its unitary character achieved after fighting internal secessionist movements. For the Marquis, the art of this period should be called “Hispano-Muslim” rather than Islamic. He believed that it constituted one of the most brilliant periods in the history of Spain, far superior to that of the Christian kingdoms of the north (although, paradoxically, he also considered these “the true Spain”).<sup>44</sup>

Regarding Spanish castles, the same author pointed out that, unlike similar structures in other countries such as France, their function was above all military; the move toward residential use came only at the end of the Middle Ages.<sup>45</sup> The military character of early medieval fortifications was, he thought, due to the Byzantine contribution brought to Iberia by the Muslims: “Our homeland saw a long series of splendid fortresses rise on its soil whose origin came from far away and in which all the art of classical, Byzantine, and oriental fortification was continued with its own characteristics.” He added that “the Spanish castle was surely the oldest and the most important in Europe.”<sup>46</sup> In his view, the Islamic conquest facilitated the recovery of ancient poliorcetic systems of fortification, including the preference for elevated locations, double protective walls with forward towers, and a generally rectangular or polygonal plan.<sup>47</sup> Ironically, then, compared to other European defensive systems, Spanish cas-

42 David A. Wacks, “Whose Spain Is It, Anyway?” in *Whose Middle Ages?: Teachable Moments for an Ill-Used Past*, ed. Andrew Albin et al. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019), 181–90.

43 García Sanjuán, “Al-Andalus en el nacionalcatolicismo,” 207; Jesús Lorenzo, “Arqueología de al-Andalus durante el franquismo,” in Moreno Martín, *El franquismo y la apropiación del pasado*, 209–34, at 217.

44 Marqués de Lozoya, *Historia del Arte Hispánico* (Barcelona: Salvat, 1931), 1: 230.

45 Marqués de Lozoya, *Historia del Arte Hispánico*, 1: 24–25.

46 [AEAC], “Fines y aspiraciones de la Asociación,” *BAEAC* 1 (1953): 19–23, at 19.

47 Fernández-Shaw, “Un programa para la conservación,” 46; Ángel Dotor, “Los castillos árabes en España,” *BAEAC* 48 (1965): 7–26, at. 7–8; Dotor, “El gran castillo o alcazaba islámica de Baños de la Encina,” *BAEAC* 57 (1967): 147–58, at 148.

tles owed their modernity to the innovations imported by Islamic armies when they conquered the Iberian Peninsula in 711.

Another strategy to “Hispanize” the castles of Al-Andalus was to present them as proof of the Umayyad dynasty’s attempt to unify the territory. The obsession with territorial unity was so intense in the writing of national histories such as the Marquis of Lozoya’s that it paradoxically ended up by placing the Umayyads on the same level as the Catholic Monarchs Isabella and Ferdinand, the Hapsburg Empire, and Franco, who were all seen to be engaged in comparable attempts to unify Spain.<sup>48</sup> In a subtle and gradual but intentional way, the fortifications of Al-Andalus came to be called “Hispano-Arabic” castles.<sup>49</sup> The use of this prefix (as in the case of “Hispano-Muslim” art) was a rhetorical strategy to erase the Islamic roots of these cultural manifestations. Two objectives were achieved by Hispanizing the Andalusian fortresses. First, the Muslim contribution to medieval defensive architecture was minimized. Second, the same monuments, now classed as “Spanish,” could continue to exist in modern times as testimonies of the racial and spiritual essence of the nation.

## Reassessing Islamic Castles during Franco’s Regime

Despite the acknowledgment of Al-Andalus as a transmitter of certain construction techniques in military architecture, the evaluation of Spain’s Islamic past was quite negative in the years after the Civil War. The crusading spirit with which Franco had mobilized his troops was still in the air. Considering recurrent allusions to the “spirit of the nation” and to the “Spanish race” in the 1949 protection decree, one might suspect that Muslim fortresses would have become the object of a physical *damnatio memoriae*. The data, however, show that this was not the case: castles of Islamic origin (built by the Umayyads and other dynasties) were treated, on a practical if not ideological level, no differently than Christian monuments. Given the deep economic crisis during the postwar period, financial resources dedicated to artistic heritage, regardless of its cultural identity, were minimal. Only sites that could serve as propaganda for the regime (such as the Alcázar of Toledo and Covadonga) or, from the 1950s onward, as tourist attractions were the object of investment. Architectural investigation of the great sites of the Andalusian period—from the palatine city of Medina Azahara (Córdoba) and the fortress palace of the Aljafería (Zaragoza) to the Alhambra (Granada) and the citadels of Almería and Málaga—had started in the first decades of the

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<sup>48</sup> Federico Bordeje, “Las fortalezas musulmanas españolas,” *BAEAC* 4 (1953): 150–53, at 151; Rodolfo Gil Benumeya, “La Alhambra de Granada como ciudadela esencial hispano-islámica,” *BAEAC* 28 (1960): 5–30, at 21.

<sup>49</sup> Benumeya, “La Alhambra de Granada,” 9.

twentieth century and was not interrupted.<sup>50</sup> In 1958, on the occasion of an exhibition celebrating twenty years of monumental restoration after the Civil War, figures on spending disclosed that the state had disbursed more than six million pesetas for the conservation of a total of twenty-six Islamic buildings. That figure is somewhat misleading since some 90 percent went toward the restoration of only three sites (Medina Azahara, mosque of Córdoba, Alhambra); moreover, a few non-Islamic structures were included in the tally without apparent reason.<sup>51</sup>

To illustrate the postwar preservation of Islamic sites, it is useful to examine how research and restoration work was carried out at three of the most famous citadels of southern Spain: Málaga, Almería, and Jaén. By doing so, I want to demonstrate that no steps were taken to hide the Islamic past and that, on the contrary, the ultimate objective was to make these monuments more visible in order to increase their value as tourist attractions.<sup>52</sup>



**Fig. 5.4:** Málaga, Alcazaba. Photo: Fernando Domínguez Cerejido/Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 4.0).

<sup>50</sup> Lorenzo, “Arqueología de al-Andalus,” 224–32.

<sup>51</sup> Gallego Burín, *Veinte años de Restauración*, 27–33. The non-Islamic buildings were the synagogues of Córdoba and Toledo, the convent of Santa Catalina de Zafra, and the monastery of San Juan de los Reyes in Toledo.

<sup>52</sup> This has also been pointed out by Javier Ordóñez, “Moros y cristianos: Un discurso ambivalente en las restauraciones del primer franquismo,” in García, Almarcha, and Hernández, *Historia, restauración y reconstrucción*, 191–222, at 221–22.

Restoration on the Alcazaba of Málaga, originally built in the eleventh century, had begun before the Civil War. After the end of the conflict, with the devastated city at its feet, the fortified palace complex was rebuilt in imitation of the Alhambra in Granada. To suit that goal, orientalizing features, such as gardens and waterworks that would be attractive from a tourism point of view, were (re)constructed (Fig. 5.4).<sup>53</sup> Something similar occurred at Almería, an impressive citadel dating back to the Umayyad period. In 1949, the authorities expressly requested an intervention on the model adopted in Málaga. Since no sufficiently significant Islamic remains were found, however, it was decided to give more importance to the late medieval and Renaissance (i.e., Christian) periods as a way to boost the monumentality of the whole complex. The small rebuilt chapel even received a newly constructed bell tower to create a more traditional atmosphere (Fig. 5.5). A similar outcome was achieved at the castle of Santa Catalina in Jaén, albeit with the complete obliteration of the remains of the Islamic alcazar. In their stead, a hotel belonging to the state-owned network of



**Fig. 5.5:** Almería, Alcazaba, Chapel. Photo: Jebulon/Wikimedia Commons (CC 1.0 Universal Public Domain).

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<sup>53</sup> Ordóñez, “Moros y cristianos,” 196–99.

inns (Paradores Nacionales) administered by the Ministry of Information and Tourism was built immediately adjacent to the castle on the site of the Islamic ruins.<sup>54</sup> Catering to the nascent tourist industry became the guiding principle of all these interventions; this means that tourism and the income it generated had started to trump purely political agendas.



**Fig. 5.6:** Granada, Alhambra. Photo: Jebulon/Wikimedia Commons (CC 1.0 Universal Public Domain).

The official architects of Franco's regime, however, also recognized the value of the Islamic contributions to the history of Iberian architecture. Indeed, they chose the fortified palace of the Alhambra as a meeting place in 1952 to discuss the criteria for the restoration of national monuments (Fig. 5.6), issuing a text known as the Alhambra Manifesto. The selection of this site for the meeting is especially revealing because it was chosen over an overtly imperial site, the monastery of El Escorial, the main residence of the Hapsburgs located just outside Madrid.<sup>55</sup> The admiration expressed for the palace complex of the Alhambra, built under the Nasrid dynasty, even led Pedro Muguruza, Director General of Architecture, to consider the possibility of future collabora-

<sup>54</sup> Ordóñez, "Moros y cristianos," 199–209, 216–19.

<sup>55</sup> Felipe Asenjo, "Muguruza ha muerto," in Castaño Perea and Bustos Juez, *Pedro Muguruza Otaño (1893–1952): Arquitecto y académico*, 235–56, at 251.

tions with Muslim architects.<sup>56</sup> In the opinion of Franco's architects, the Alhambra anticipated architectural concepts that would not be brought to fruition until six hundred years later; they included the integration of architecture and nature, the geometrical arrangement of the spaces, the plantings in the courtyards, and the use of humble yet effective building materials.<sup>57</sup> Praise for that monument, however, did not imply recognition of Nasrid culture as such. For the regime's architects, the Alhambra remained a Spanish monument because it had been built in a "vassal" kingdom of Castile.<sup>58</sup>

Even this recognition, distorted as it was, happened only in professional circles and especially among architects. In another exhibition, named *Castillos de España*, the organizing committee was apparently unaware that, among the castles presented, there were several of Islamic origins. The catalogue accompanying the event nonetheless reiterated references to a "national spirit" and the racial particularity of the Spanish already mentioned in the castle protection decree: "Full of racial substance . . . these venerable Hispanic fortresses . . . are a symbol of our heroic past, of our energy, of our universal spiritual desire."<sup>59</sup> It seems strange, to say the least, that the Alhambra and other Andalusian citadels could fit into this kind of definition (Fig. 5.7).

During the late 1950s, coinciding with the regime's efforts to open Spain to the outside world, the public message about the Islamic architectural presence became more relaxed. An inventory drawn up in 1961 assigned almost all fortresses built in Iberia between 711 and 1100 to various Muslim dynasties.<sup>60</sup> A few years later, the *Bulletin* of the AEAC published an article on "Arab" castles in Spain that acknowledged for the first time Muslim rulers as the initiators of this type of architecture.<sup>61</sup> The same piece also recognized that more than half of the 2,538 castles that were counted had an Islamic origin and concluded that there was nothing similar in the rest of Europe. Finally, it presented nine of the most important so-called Arab castles preserved in Spain, highlighting the caliphal castle at Gormaz in the province of Soria (Fig. 5.8).

This stunning fortress also attracted the attention of Juan Antonio Gaya Nuño, an art historian who had fought on the side of the Republican government and had been subjected to a trial that condemned him to political irrelevance during the first years of the Franco regime.<sup>62</sup> Although his 1965 article about the castle was brief and in the style

56 Dirección General de Arquitectura, "Sesiones celebradas en la Alhambra durante los días 14 y 15 de octubre de 1952," *Revista Nacional de Arquitectura* 12 (1953): 12–50, at 48.

57 Dirección General de Arquitectura, "Sesiones celebradas en la Alhambra," 13.

58 Dirección General de Arquitectura, "Sesiones celebradas en la Alhambra," 17, 20.

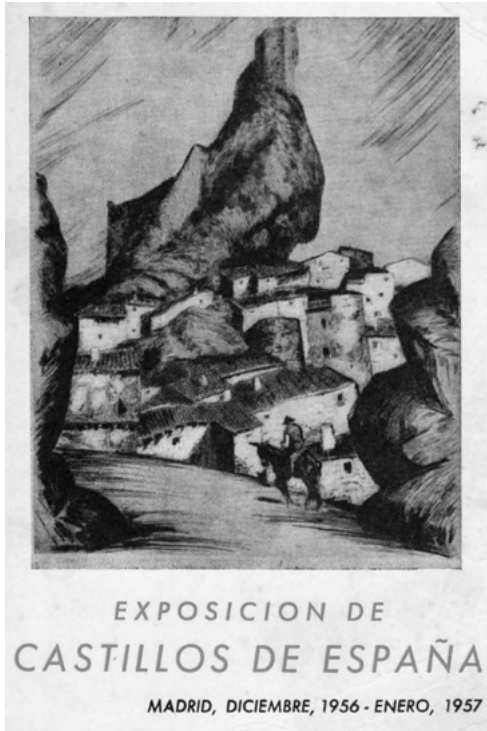
59 Sociedad Española de Amigos del Arte, *Castillos de España, Catálogo-Guía* (Madrid: AEAC and SEAA, 1957), 8–9. This exhibition should not be confused with the 1949 exhibition of the same name.

60 Cristóbal Guitart, "Ensayo de clasificación racional de los castillos españoles," *BAEAC* 33 (1961): 91–100, at 99.

61 Dotor, "Los castillos árabes," 7–12. Note that the full title of this article refers not to Spanish castles, but to "castles in Spain."

62 Josemi Lorenzo, "Juan Antonio Gaya Nuño, maestro sin discípulos, autor del primer manual de Historia del Arte español (1946)," in Moreno Martín, *El franquismo y la apropiación del pasado*, 307–35.





**Fig. 5.7:** Front cover of the catalogue of the exhibition *Castillos de España*, 1956–57. Photo from *Castillos de España*.

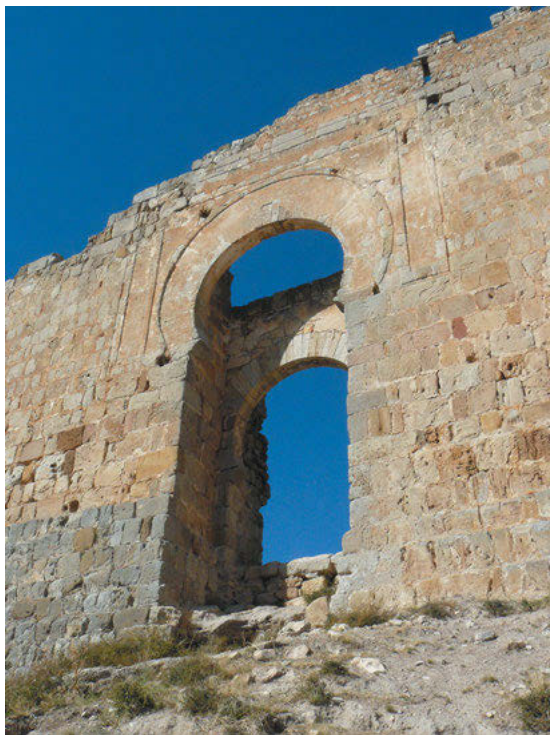
of a literary essay, it was the first detailed treatment of the building, which it presented in entirely positive terms.<sup>63</sup> Gaya's numerous favorable references to the nation's Islamic past were particularly remarkable. He went so far as to write that "My ancestors fought here in the tenth century; I don't care if they were Moors or Christians."<sup>64</sup> Only four years later, archaeological excavations at Gormaz began and they are considered pioneering works of modern Spanish medieval archaeology.<sup>65</sup>

With the end of the dictatorship near, the ultranationalist, more or less explicitly anti-Islamic discourses, started to seem obsolete. Yet they continued to echo in popular publications, if not in scholarly texts. In 1967, the Marquis of Lozoya published *Castillos de España*, a work written for a broad audience in which 120 Spanish castles

<sup>63</sup> Juan A. Gaya, "La peregrinación a Gormaz," *BAEAC* 50 (1965): 317–23. See also J. Gil Montero, "El Castillo de Gormaz," *BAEAC* 7 (1955): 296–98, at 298.

<sup>64</sup> Gaya, "La peregrinación," 318.

<sup>65</sup> Mertxe Urteaga and Manuel Retuerce, "Las excavaciones en la fortaleza de Gormaz (Soria) y la introducción en España del Harris Matrix System," in *Al-kitab: Juan Zozaya Stabel Hansen* (Madrid: AEAM, 2016), 134–44, at 137.



**Fig. 5.8:** Gormaz (Soria), Caliphal Castle, Main entrance. Photo: Windwhistler/Wikimedia Commons (CC BY 3.0 unported).

were presented through short texts and photographs. Only twelve were identified as Islamic (even though it was known that approximately half of all medieval Spanish castles were of Islamic origin); this suggests that the Marquis intentionally chose castles without an Islamic connection for his book.<sup>66</sup>

## Ruins, Tourism, and International Promotion

The defeat of the Berlin-Rome Axis in 1945 and the ensuing isolation of fascist Spain put an end to Franco's imperial dream, but not to his national Catholic project for the country, which would last until 1975. Some megalomaniacal architectural projects, such as the Falange's national headquarters, were abandoned.<sup>67</sup> The 1950s were characterized by a degree of economic recovery, the progressive opening to the interna-

<sup>66</sup> Marqués de Lozoya, *Castillos de España* (Barcelona: Salvat, 1967).

<sup>67</sup> Lasso de la Vega, "Pedro Muguruza," 208.

tional market, and the recognition from foreign countries that culminated in Spain's entry into the United Nations. The three pillars on which economic development was consolidated were tourism, emigration to other European countries, and the influx of foreign capital in search of cheap labor. From a cultural and religious perspective, this apparently modern Spain could not continue to embrace an ultra-Catholic view of the past based on a nonexistent national spirit. In the realm of artistic creation, the resulting changes fostered the emergence of a younger generation of painters who started to explore avant-garde art (especially abstraction) proscribed by Franco's regime. In the domain of architecture, it meant renouncing an imperial national style turned toward the past and adopting more modern, international tendencies (such as rationalism).<sup>68</sup> The perception of medieval castles, however, remained unchanged. Romantic and anachronistically ultranationalist thoughts continued to be prevalent; silhouettes of ancient fortresses emerging from the fields of rural Spain continued to be interpreted as reminders of a glorious past. "There is nothing more spiritual or more worthy of respect than a Spanish castle . . . Even in its most ruinous and disconsolate state, it offers itself to us strangely alive, immortal, and eternal."<sup>69</sup> The evocative power of fortresses in ruins was used by Francoism not only as evidence of a bygone era but also as a warning against the tragedy of recent times caused, so the official rhetoric had it, by Republican Marxism.<sup>70</sup>

At the same time, the possibility of using medieval and Renaissance castles as tourist attractions started to take hold in government circles. From 1944 onward, the Ministry of Tourism and Information invested in the Paradores Nacionales.<sup>71</sup> Two of the chain's hotels, in Ciudad Rodrigo (Salamanca) and Oropesa (Toledo), had been opened during the Second Republic (1931–39) and cleverly incorporated what remained of the former structures.<sup>72</sup> After the Civil War, both were enhanced with a complete set of furniture and objects that helped to create a supposedly medieval atmosphere.<sup>73</sup> Following the same idea, the construction of the Paradores of Málaga and Granada was approved in the 1940s. While the first was planned on the hillside of

<sup>68</sup> Asenjo, "Muguruza ha muerto," 250.

<sup>69</sup> Miguel García de Mora, "La conservación de los castillos, exigencia de todos," *BAEAC* 24 (1959): 29–31, at 31.

<sup>70</sup> The most eloquent example of the use of ruins as a reminder of Marxist destruction was the prohibition to rebuild some villages, among them Belchite Viejo in the province of Zaragoza. See Pedro Gómez Aparicio, "El símbolo de los dos Belchites" *Reconstrucción* 1 (1940): 6–9, at 7, and discussion by Esther Almarcha Núñez-Herrador, "La elocuencia de las ruinas," *Conversaciones . . . con Nicholas Stanley-Price* 9 (2020): 165–81.

<sup>71</sup> María J. Rodríguez, *La red de Paradores: Arquitectura e historia del turismo 1911–1951* (Madrid: Turner, 2018), 173.

<sup>72</sup> Rodríguez, *La red de Paradores*, 125.

<sup>73</sup> Luis M. Feduchi, "Parador Nacional de Oropesa," *Revista Nacional de Arquitectura* 84 (1948): 479–81.

the Andalusian castle of Gibralfaro, the second was built within the historic site of the Alhambra itself.<sup>74</sup>

One can therefore conclude that the decree for the protection of castles was, at least in part, enacted to support the nascent tourist industry.<sup>75</sup> Following this idea, the AEAC, founded in 1953, recognized the value of Spanish fortresses as tourist attractions and, thus, a means to generate income. In addition, the association's founding statutes declared that one of its goals was to organize excursions, allowing its members to experience the castles directly.<sup>76</sup> With the support of the Ministry of Information and Tourism, the AEAC started to offer trips as soon as the following year; these could even involve air travel, thanks to the use of Air Force planes.<sup>77</sup> In areas located away from major towns, access to castles was improved and municipalities were asked to repair roads and build adequate facilities for potential visitors.<sup>78</sup> More consequentially, in 1964 a special plan used significant economic investment to stop the destruction of historic castles. The impetus was no longer, as in the 1949 protection decree, political. Instead, following the path established by the Paradores project, the goal was to market the castles to foreign tourists and demonstrate that Spain was much more than a country of "beaches and sun."<sup>79</sup>

The AEAC was active in the international promotion of Spanish castles. After the success of the second *Castillos de España* exhibition in Madrid, the organization hoped to send the display abroad, to Paris and London. This move, responding to the general modernization of Spain, was supported by the Directorate of Cultural Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>80</sup> In addition to European and American venues for exhibitions on Spanish castles, others were planned in the Middle East (though they were never carried out).<sup>81</sup> Even more extravagant ideas were proposed to support the preservation of the venerable castles. One sought foreign sponsorship, particularly in Latin American countries and nations of the Islamic world, by appealing alternatively to the Spanish and Muslim heritage. These countries would be responsible for the restoration and conservation of the castles; in exchange, they would be allowed to install museums on the premises in which their own cultural achievements could be disseminated across Spain.<sup>82</sup> In 1962, these ideas were pushed even further when the Spanish ambassador to

74 Rodríguez, *La red de Paradores*, 218–20.

75 Almarcha and Villena. "Los castillos ¿destino turístico?," 70.

76 [AEAC], "El decreto de 22 de abril," 62; AEAC, *Estatutos de la Asociación Española de Amigos de los Castillos* (Madrid: AEAC, 1953).

77 [AEAC], "Audiencia concedida," 107; Almarcha and Villena. "Los castillos ¿destino turístico?," 85, 87.

78 [AEAC], "Editorial," 139.

79 Almarcha and Villena, "Una nación de castillos," 199.

80 Fernández-Shaw, "Un programa para la conservación," 49.

81 [AEAC], "Audiencia concedida," 105; Almarcha and Villena. "Los castillos ¿destino turístico?," 81.

82 Fernández-Shaw, "Un programa para la conservación," 50. For another Franco-era cooperative project between Spain and the Islamic world involving architectural heritage (the mosque at Córdoba), see the contribution by Michele Lamprakos in this volume.

the United States transmitted to his government a project sponsored by a group of Texas millionaires who would restore a number of castles in return for a grant of ownership for life.<sup>83</sup>

To conclude, one can say that, by the end of Franco's regime in 1975, the old Spanish fortresses were no longer of interest as witnesses to national and Catholic unity or as racially-inflected reflections of the "Spanish spirit." Instead, they were reconceived as tourist attractions. Both the old and the new rationales played a role in setting in motion the restoration of the monuments I have discussed. In the early years of the dictatorship, some castles—generally of little importance—were rebuilt to house political institutions and facilities connected to the police; those that promised economic profit were converted—totally or partially—into luxury hotels (the *Paradores*) in response to an increase in tourist demand. This is one of the many manifestations of the dictatorship's adoption of a double discourse, one that alternated between ideology and pragmatism. On the one hand, the regime's propaganda apparatus focused on the supremacy of national Catholic thought tinged with a layer of fascist rhetoric; on the other, the need to bring Spain out of the isolation into which it had been condemned after the defeat of Nazi Germany meant that the built heritage was recognized for its economic potential. The same mix of ideological and practical considerations can be seen in the Decree of Protection of the Castles approved in 1949. While it is a text full of propagandistic allusions and triumphal rhetoric, the sweeping restoration projects it envisioned remained, in practice, severely underfunded and, ultimately, unrealized. Even so, the lack of appropriate resources for restoration and conservation projects affected Christian castles and Islamic fortresses alike.

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83 Almarcha and Villena, "Una nación de castillos," 200.



Marcus van der Meulen

# The Construction of a National Patrimony? Restoration of Gothic Cathedrals and Churches in the Polish People's Republic

After the Second World War, a ruined Polish state was rebuilt in ways that redefined the country both geographically and politically. Geographically, the loss of eastern territories to the Soviet Union, including the historic cities of Vilnius and L'viv, was compensated during Allied conferences by the transfer of territory from defeated Germany to the new Polish state to form the so-called recovered territories.<sup>1</sup> Politically, a socialist regime was established with the support of the Soviet Union; this became the Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa (Polish People's Republic, hereafter PRL). The approach to historic buildings in this new state was not only defined by the destruction that had taken place between 1939 and 1945 but also influenced by postwar changes in the political, economic, and social systems.<sup>2</sup> Wartime destruction had sparked discussions among representatives of the architecture and monument preservation communities concerning the possibility and necessity of rebuilding historic structures.<sup>3</sup> The new socialist regime took the protection, preservation, and even the reconstruction of the nation's architectural heritage very seriously and supported the restoration of historic buildings by allocating significant funds for this purpose.<sup>4</sup> A substantial portion of the restored structures were medieval churches; as religious structures, these were potentially counterrevolutionary.

Yet during the radical, or Stalinist, phase (1947–56) of the PRL under the leadership of Bolesław Bierut (1892–1956), a state opposed to the construction of places of worship initiated and supported the restoration of numerous Gothic churches and cathedrals.<sup>5</sup> So much so that I will argue there was a process of “re-Gothicization” as part of a policy of nation building by the Stalinist state. Churches and cathedrals were restored to an ideal former state taken from their long history, one that was assumed to be untouched by foreign, especially German, influences. This was achieved by removing later interventions, particularly those in Baroque, neoclassical, and nine-

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1 R.M. Douglas, *Orderly and Humane: The Expulsion of the Germans after the Second World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

2 Bogusław Szmygin, *Kształtowanie koncepcji zabytku i doktryny konserwatorskiej w Polsce w XX wieku* (Lublin: Wydawnictwa Uczelniane, 2000), 117.

3 Szmygin, *Kształtowanie koncepcji zabytku*, 146.

4 Jan Zachwatowicz, *La protection des monuments historiques en Pologne* (Warsaw: Editions Polonia, 1965), 34.

5 Mateusz Opaliński, “Zgody nie wyrażono”: Problem budownictwa sakralnego w diecezji łódzkiej 1945–1989 (Łódź: Księży Młyn, 2018), 61–74.

teenth-century historicist styles, and by constructing an often-invented Gothic exterior and interior. The Gothic church, in essence, came to represent the Polish nation.

This development is seemingly contradictory and requires clarification. Not only did a socialist state advocating atheism have a troubled relation with religion and religious buildings, but restoring and rebuilding Gothic structures seems particularly illogical given that this style was often associated with the (recently defeated) Germans. Through an analysis of the status of Gothic in Polish territory beginning in the eighteenth century and going through the era of Prussian, German, and Russian imperialism to the 1970s, I show how Gothic came to embody the Polish nation. The new PRL-led Polish state, with close ties to the Stalinist Soviet Union, needed a built heritage that supported the national state-constructing myth. That was to be the so-called Piast concept, which held that Poland had always been a homogeneous nation within its (newly defined) territorial boundaries. Re-Gothicization thus had a decisive political goal: uniting the nation against a common enemy (presented primarily as German and Lutheran) and so legitimizing the new state. Reconstructing Gothic buildings became an instrument for constructing a unified nation.

## Claiming Authority over Religious Buildings

To understand the reconstruction of Gothic churches and cathedrals in Poland, it is necessary to consider the cultural transformation experienced by the nation during the long nineteenth century. It was not until November 1918 that Poland regained independence after a long and traumatic period that had started in the late eighteenth century when the country was divided between its three imperialist neighbors: Russia, Prussia/Germany, and the Hapsburg Empire. Architecture during this period of partitions became a political tool for cultural transformation, particularly in the German- and Russian-controlled territories where strategies of Germanization and Russification were implemented.<sup>6</sup> Both Russia and Prussia built garrison churches (churches for the troops) for specific religious denominations and in particular styles as a strategy to claim authority over the territories they now controlled. In Vistula Land, as the Russian part of Poland was known between 1867 and 1915, Orthodox religious buildings in an architectural idiom alien to the region were erected following that strategy; their numbers far exceeded the actual need for Orthodox places of worship.<sup>7</sup>

The Russification of the urban landscape was particularly pronounced in Warsaw. The most famous example is the now-demolished Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in

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6 Michał Pszczółkowski, "Architecture as a Tool of Transculturation in Polish Lands during the Partitions," in *Art and Politics*, ed. Dragan Damjanovic et al. (Zagreb: FF-press, 2019), 325–33.

7 For Orthodox religious buildings as tool of cultural imperialism, see Piotr Paszkiewicz, *Pod berłem Romanowów: sztuka rosyjska w Warszawie 1815–1915* (Warsaw: Inst. Sztuki PAN, 1991).





**Fig. 6.1:** Warsaw, Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, ca. 1910; photograph by K. Wojutyński. Warsaw, National Library. Photo: Public domain.

Saxon Square (Fig. 6.1), but garrison churches sprung up in highly visible places throughout the city. These Russian and Orthodox buildings exhibited both an architectural language until then alien in this part of Europe and a highly political iconography. In some places in Vistula Land, Catholic churches “were forced to have hideous, Byzantine-Moscow and onion-like cupolas,” as one critic put it after Poland regained independence in 1918, suggesting that onion domes and Byzantine-inspired forms embodied Russian imperialism for the native population.<sup>8</sup>

In the German parts of partitioned Poland, the connection between state and religion, between throne and altar, was enhanced because Lutheranism was part of state ideology.<sup>9</sup> The desire to strengthen the German character of the east of its empire was also repeatedly stressed as a justification for the construction of public buildings. This brought with it a form of Gothic style, which was adopted as the leading building tradition in the annexed territories. Ever since Goethe’s 1773 essay *Von Deutscher Baukunst* (On German Architecture) praised Strasbourg Cathedral as a German monument, the

<sup>8</sup> Pszczółkowski, “Architecture as a Tool,” 331. For more on the Russian use of neo-Byzantine architecture as a political tool, including a discussion of the Nevsky cathedral in Warsaw, see the contribution by Ivan Foletti in this volume.

<sup>9</sup> Piotr Birecki, *Das Evangelische Kirchenbauwesen in Westpreußen: Die Beziehungen zwischen dem Staat und der Evangelisch-Unierten Kirche* (Torun: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, 2022), 341.

German-speaking world considered Gothic architecture to be of German origin.<sup>10</sup> More specifically, Gothic came to be associated with the Teutonic (German) Order, a military-religious institution whose main seat was in the thirteenth-century brick castle of Marienburg (Malbork in Polish).<sup>11</sup> Thus, in the nineteenth century, the most commonly used style for places of worship was a historicist architecture inspired by medieval “brick Gothic” (*Backsteingotik*) buildings of northern Germany, particularly those found in Hanseatic cities along the North and Baltic Seas.



**Fig. 6.2:** Ludwig Dihm, Garrison Church in Olsztyn, early twentieth century. Photo: Author.

Lutheran garrison churches were constructed in Olsztyn (Fig. 6.2), Szczecin, Gdańsk-Wrzeszcz, and Grudziądz in this style.<sup>12</sup> Along with churches designed for the troops, Lutheran parish churches were also built in the same style (for example in Bydgoszcz

<sup>10</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, “On German Architecture,” trans. John Gage in *German Essays on Art History*, ed. Gert Schiff (New York: Continuum, 1988), 33–40.

<sup>11</sup> Pszczółkowski, “Architecture as a Tool.” The Teutonic Knights organized regular crusades, forced pagan populations to convert, and essentially colonized parts of northern Poland and the Baltics. The Order was defeated by the Poles and Lithuanians at the Battle of Grunwald-Tannenberg in 1410.

<sup>12</sup> Birecki, *Das Evangelische Kirchenbauwesen*, 333.

[Bromberg]) while Catholic churches were demolished.<sup>13</sup> Unsurprisingly, the Polish opinion at the time was that German chancellor Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* between the Prussian state and the Roman Catholic church was a strategy aimed at Germanizing the Polish population through a concerted effort to alter the built environment.<sup>14</sup> During the First World War, it was observed that Gothic was "a German architecture . . . imposed on us with a wave of Teutonic intrusion; we must fight it as it is foreign to our own traditions."<sup>15</sup>

## Interwar Inclinations

The legacy of the partitions meant that the Second Polish Republic (1918–39) had a challenging time rebuilding the country. Understandably, questions related to architecture, church construction, and the renovation of public buildings were of lesser importance to the government of this young state than more pressing social and political issues.<sup>16</sup> Yet in the architecture and monument preservation communities, reconstruction became a topic of debate after decades of Russification and Germanization.<sup>17</sup> During the interwar years, the idea took shape that reconstruction in a national style should be considered "the duty of a patriotic society."<sup>18</sup> There was also a theoretical debate about what Polish characteristics in architecture might look like: what should the appearance of Catholic churches be and what distinct role should they play in shaping the Polish political and cultural landscape? At the same time, it became clear how difficult it was to capture any characteristics defining a Polish architectural style. It was much easier to determine what was *not* Polish: this was Gothic. Because of its historic association with Germany, the Gothic style was perceived by many as an insult to the Polish people and their built environment in the interwar period.<sup>19</sup>

Actual reconstructions began relatively spontaneously during the First World War after Russian troops left the Polish territories and abandoned their places of worship. The Orthodox churches, built in the distinctive Russian-Byzantine style, were not

13 Pszczółkowski, "Architecture as a Tool."

14 Rudolf Jaworski, *Handel und Gewerbe im Nationalitätenkampf: Studien zum Wirtschaftsgegnung der Polen in der Provinz Posen (1871–1914)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986).

15 "W sprawie odbudowy wsi i miasteczek," *Gazeta Rolnicza*, 2 January 1915, 9.

16 The war-damaged town of Kalisz was an exception.

17 Anna Tejszewska, "National Style in the Reconstruction of Poland After World War I—Theory and Practice," trans. Agnieszka Tarabula, in *Reconstructions and Modernizations of Historic Towns in Europe in the First Half of the Twentieth Century: Nation-Politics-Society*, ed. Iwona Baranska and Makary Gorzynski (Kalisz: Kaliskie Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk, 2016), 143–71.

18 Aneta Borowik, "O jednej z odmian narodowego romantyzmu. 'Styl wschodniomałopolski': geneza, twórcy, przykłady," in *Sztuka Kresów Wschodnich*, ed. Andrzej Betlej and Anna Markiewicz (Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza Text, 2012), 7: 212–13.

19 Tejszewska, "National Style in the Reconstruction of Poland," 147.

simply abandoned but converted for use by other denominations, mainly Catholicism. The conversion process necessitated remaking the interiors because of differences in liturgy, but it also extended to the buildings' exteriors. Initially, architectural interventions consisted of barely more than a pragmatic removal of Moscow-style ornaments; later, the process turned into more of a remodeling in either a neoclassical or modernist style.<sup>20</sup> Since the construction of Russian Orthodox churches during the years of partition had far exceeded the need for places of worship, the functional conversion of these sites for use by different denominations did not solve the problem of a sizeable number of buildings that were both empty and resented. As a consequence, some were demolished, such as the abandoned Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Warsaw, pulled down between 1924 and 1926. The plan for this action was supported by the architect Mikołaj Tołwiński, who argued that the demolition would not be "an act of political or religious hatred, but . . . a patriotic duty."<sup>21</sup> In the 1930s, the state revived the idea of building a national shrine in Warsaw—the Temple of Divine Providence—possibly as a riposte to the destroyed cathedral. The archbishop of Warsaw, Cardinal Kakowski, presented official recommendations in which he argued that there were not only differences between Muslim mosques, Jewish synagogues, and Christian churches, but also that a Catholic church was different from an Orthodox *cerkiew* or a Protestant *Kirche*. Importantly for our subject, the cardinal's recommendations went further, as he categorized Christian churches by their architectural styles: Baroque was considered Ukrainian and Orthodox, while Gothic was German and Lutheran. For the Catholic structure, Kakowski proposed modernism as the appropriate style, which was indeed used for many new parish churches built (often without official state permission) in the PRL.<sup>22</sup>

Although the idea of reconstructing the country's built environment in a way that would embody the Polish nation changed somewhat over the course of the first half of the twentieth century, the general consensus in the Second Polish Republic regarding Gothic was dismissive—the red brick Gothic style was best avoided.<sup>23</sup> After 1945, however, churches were restored in precisely this idiom, a surprising change in architectural policy that raises three questions: Why did a socialist state feel compelled to restore medieval churches? What did the Gothic style represent in the PRL? And, finally, how can the shift in its appreciation be understood?

20 In Warsaw, the Protestant Ascension Church near Lublin Union Square is an example.

21 Mikołaj Tołwiński, *O pomnikach i cerkwiach prawosławnych* (Warsaw: Galewski i Dau, 1919), 6.

22 Aleksander Kakowski, "Referat I. Em. Kardynała ks. Aleksandra Kakowskiego w sprawie projektowanej budowy świątyni 'Opactwa Bożej,'" *Architektura i Budownictwo: Miesięcznik ilustrowany* 8 (1932), 68–69. This official document by the Polish episcopate explicitly used the Russian and German words for "church." It also asserted that modernism was appropriate for the design of the Temple of Divine Providence "as long as it doesn't resemble a factory."

23 Pszczółkowski, "Architecture as a Tool."

## Restoring Gothic

It was during the Stalinist phase of the PRL that the restoration of a large number of churches and cathedrals was not only initiated but also often (largely) completed. Although many of these structures had been damaged during the Second World War, the restorations cannot simply be explained as the result of a need for places of worship since, as mentioned above, the construction of new churches was actively opposed by the state in this radical era during which church-state relations were in great crisis, with increasing official attacks on the Catholic Church, including the imprisonment of priests.<sup>24</sup> “Bricks and stones from war-damaged churches are now used to build prisons in which numerous priests are being held,” the theologian D. J. Dunn wrote at the time.<sup>25</sup> One of the jailed priests was Stefan Wyszyński (1901–81), who had been appointed archbishop of Gniezno and Warsaw in 1948. His example, to which many more could be added, proves that the hostility of the state toward religion during the Stalinist period was significant. Yet precisely the same state initiated, financed, and coordinated the reconstruction of a large number of medieval churches and cathedrals, most of them built in the Gothic style. Wyszyński, now a cardinal, wrote to the leader of the PRL, Bierut, on 8 May 1953: “We want to emphasize that the state has made a significant contribution to this reconstruction work [on the churches].”<sup>26</sup> This restoration of churches in a state hostile to religion is unexpected and demands explanation.

In the German Democratic Republic, the national postwar reconstruction effort included a secularization of the urban landscape.<sup>27</sup> The socialist regime in East Berlin was unambiguous in its understanding that “a socialist city does not need Gothic churches.”<sup>28</sup> Its counterpart in Warsaw, however, was of a different opinion. The Polish socialist regime supported the restoration of historic buildings, including places of worship, but it required the buildings to be remodeled in line with a Communist reinterpretation. Some preservation professionals objected to this political instrumental-

24 Opaliński, *Zgody nie wyrażono Problem budownictwa sakralnego*, 61–74.

25 Georges Castellan, “*Gott schütze Polen!*”: *Geschichte des polnischen Katholizismus 1795–1982* (Freiburg: Kerle, 1981), 226–27.

26 Castellan, “*Gott schütze Polen!*”.

27 Marcus van der Meulen, “One Ideology, Two Visions: Ecclesiastical Buildings and State Identity in the Socialist Capital during the Post-War Rebuilding Decades 1945–1975, East-Berlin and Warsaw,” in *State Construction and Art in Central East Europe 1918–2018*, ed. Agnieszka Chmielewska, Irena Kosowska, and Marcin Lachowski (New York: Routledge, 2022), 268–77.

28 As Walter Ulbricht, First Secretary of the German Democratic Republic, allegedly exclaimed when he saw the reconstruction model for Dresden in 1953. See Andreas Golinski, *Dresden zum Weitererzählen: Von Kaffeefiltern, Drachenboten und verbogenen Hufeisen* (Dresden: Books on Demand GmbH, 2010), 16.

zation of architecture and restoration.<sup>29</sup> Yet a conservation manual from the 1950s mentions that conservation and reconstruction of historic buildings are “not detached or isolated in a complex of creative changes in various fields . . . . On the contrary, they are ideologically related to the entirety of life, just like in other People’s Republics following the example of the Soviet Union.”<sup>30</sup> The conservation and restoration of historic buildings was thus part of an interpretation of the past and of national traditions that could perform educational and ideological tasks in the hopes of shaping contemporary individuals living in a socialist society.<sup>31</sup> Any restoration project from this period should therefore be seen within the framework of Bierut’s totalitarian regime.

To show how Polish Gothic churches were restored in this period, I now come to my four case studies; together, they give a full picture of how Gothic in Poland was re-framed, reinterpreted, and even newly assembled.<sup>32</sup> St. Mary’s Church in Gdańsk offers a good example of how restoration in post–World War II Poland could be complex and political (Fig. 6.3). Gdańsk posed a problem for the PRL and its efforts to legitimate territorial claims over this former Hanseatic, largely German-speaking city. But the city, and especially the Gothic St. Mary’s Church, also provided an opportunity. Scholarship during the socialist era emphasized that St. Mary’s had been remodeled between 1484 and 1502, that is, during the period when Gdańsk had come under royal Polish rule.<sup>33</sup> This remodeling, influenced by brick building traditions of the Teutonic Order (which were not, strictly speaking, Polish), was subsequently reinterpreted as representing the late Gothic style particular to Gdańsk.<sup>34</sup> The church’s star-shaped vaults were understood to be a typical element of this assumed local tradition and so were meticulously restored in 1947–48.<sup>35</sup>

It was not only the architecture of St. Mary’s that needed interpretation; the church also fell under suspicion because the Lutheran Reformation was perceived negatively in the PRL. Catholics had lost this vast brick Gothic church as their place of worship in 1572, after some decades of simultaneous use by Protestants and Catholics.<sup>36</sup> In the PRL, the underlying assumption was that Catholicism, unlike Lutheranism, was Polish, in

29 Piotr Majewski, *Czas końca, Czas początku: Architektura I urbanistyka Warszawy historycznej 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Bellona, 2018), 421.

30 Józef Lepiarczyk, *Konserwacja zabytków architektury* (Kraków: Państwowe wydawnictwo naukowe, 1954), 126.

31 Szmygin, *Kształtowanie koncepcji zabytku*, 136–37.

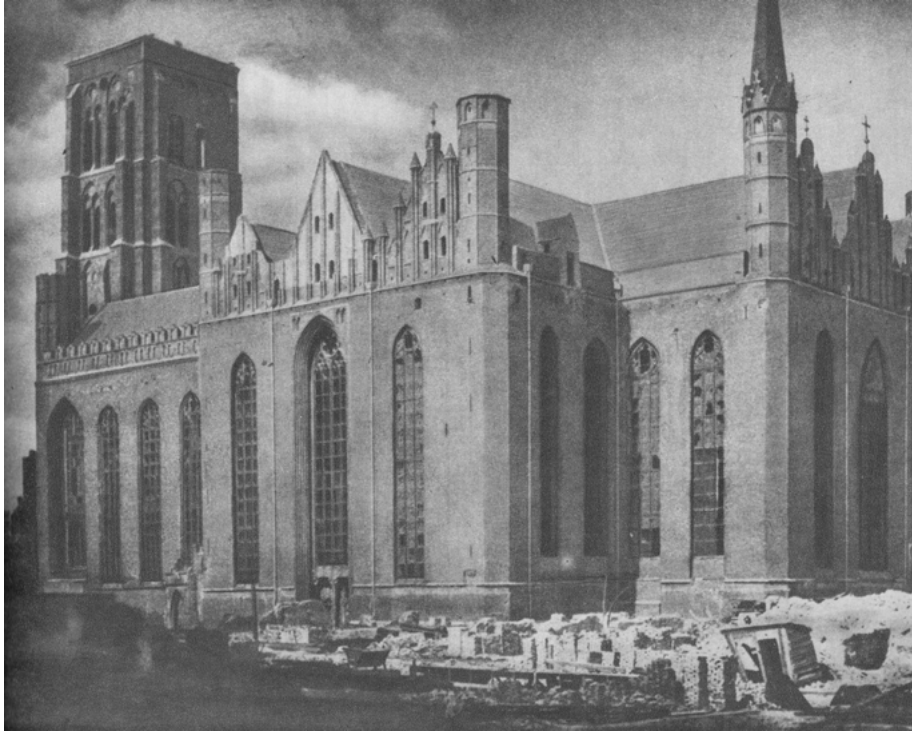
32 Many more medieval churches and cathedrals were restored during the Stalinist phase of the PRL, including the Romanesque Tum collegiate church (1947–61), the Cieszyń Rotunda (1949–55), and the Gothic Church of SS. Martin and Nicholas in Bydgoszcz (1952–54).

33 See, for example, Stanisław Mossakowski, “Art in Poland in Copernicus’s Time,” trans. Bogusław Bucziński, in *Poland: The Land of Copernicus*, ed. Bogdan Suchodolski (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1973), 148.

34 Mossakowski, “Art in Poland,” 146–47.

35 Bohdan Szermer, *Gdańsk: Vergangenheit und Gegenwart* (Warsaw: Interpress, 1971), 106.

36 Stanisław Bogdanowicz, *Die Basilika zu St. Marien in Danzig* (Dülmen: Laumann, 1993), 10.



**Fig. 6.3:** Gdańsk, St. Mary's Church after World War II; photograph by T. Wański from *Piękno Polski Ludowej* (Warsaw, 1952). Photo: Wikimedia Commons (public domain).

keeping with the “Polish-Catholic” (*Polak-Katolik*) concept that had developed in the nineteenth century.<sup>37</sup> In the years after the Second World War, the damaged building was reframed to emphasize more sharply its Catholic identity. St. Mary's was now called the “Cathedral of the Sea” and identified as the church of the “Metropolitan of the Polish Coast,” even though it had never been the seat of a bishop.<sup>38</sup> When the Polish state gave it to the Catholics after the war, this transfer of ownership was presented as a restoration to its original, rightful users.<sup>39</sup> Reallocating Lutheran places of worship to Catholics must be understood within the context of mass migration after the Second World War, when German-speaking Lutheran natives of Gdańsk, Pomerania, and Silesia left and were replaced by Poles coming from central Poland and territories that had

<sup>37</sup> Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland*, vol. 2., 1795 to the Present (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 152–65.

<sup>38</sup> Aleksander Masłowski, “Gdańskie rocznice: Powrót katolików do Kościoła Mariackiego,” <https://gdansk.naszemiasto.pl/gdanskie-rocznice-powrot-katolikow-do-kościoła-mariackiego/ar/c1-2997732>.

<sup>39</sup> Masłowski, “Gdańskie rocznice.”

become part of the Soviet Union.<sup>40</sup> From this Catholic perspective, St. Mary's had been misappropriated by the Lutherans. The church's interior, however, home to fine Gothic painted and carved altarpieces, offers an outstanding example of medieval religious art and preserves a significant amount of pre-Reformation fixtures and fittings, including the important carved wooden sacrament tower of 1482 in the choir. St. Mary's thus confirms that Lutheranism served as a "preserving force" for medieval Catholic religious art by freezing it in time, and so counters the view that Protestants mistreated Catholic churches after the Reformation.<sup>41</sup>

A second example of preservation that contradicts the narrative of Lutheran misuse of churches and shows how medieval art was reframed after World War II is the wooden chandelier in Kołobrzeg (Kolberg), a coastal town in Pomerania situated between Gdańsk and Szczecin. The chandelier was donated by the Schleiffen family. Scientific research conducted in the PRL claimed to have uncovered this name; it changed it, however, from the German Schleiffen into the Slavic Śliwinów.<sup>42</sup> Examples such as this and St. Mary's illustrate how heritage reinterpretation became a crucial tool for the young PRL's efforts to legitimize the inclusion of the recovered territories that had been German until 1945. Through its restoration policies (as much as in other media, such as texts), the PRL asserted that during the Middle Ages these spaces and objects had been Polish.

## Rebuilding Gothic

The Second World War had left many towns and cities in the PRL badly damaged. Notable here was Warsaw, where the deliberate annihilation of the built environment after the failed 1944 uprising served as a tragic nadir (Fig. 6.4). Across the country, the destruction was typically blamed on the Nazis. Jan Zachwatowicz (1900–83), general conservator of monuments of the PRL, spoke of the determination to reconstruct the lost heritage after the intentional destruction of Polish patrimony by the fascist invaders (a common characterization of the Germans in the postwar years).<sup>43</sup> Polish authorities, however, may have considerably exaggerated the level of destruction, as some historians have suggested.<sup>44</sup> Overstating the war damage should be seen as a

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<sup>40</sup> Davies, *God's Playground*, 413–81.

<sup>41</sup> Johann M. Fritz, *Die bewahrende Kraft des Luthertums: Mittelalterliche Kunstwerke in evangelischen Kirchen* (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 1997). For other examples of this phenomenon in present-day Poland, see Janina Kochanowska, *Perły Pomorza* (Szczecin: Oficyna IN PLUS, 2011).

<sup>42</sup> Robert Śmigieński, *Kołobrzeg przewodnik milenijny* (Kołobrzeg: Agencja Reklamowa "Plus," 2000).

<sup>43</sup> Jan Zachwatowicz, "Program i zasady konserwacji zabytków," *Biuletyn historii sztuki i kultury* 1–2 (1946): 48–52.

<sup>44</sup> Mark Mazower, "Reconstruction: The Historiographical Issues," in *Postwar Reconstruction in Europe: International Perspectives, 1945–1949*, ed. Mazower (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 17–28, at 23.





**Fig. 6.4:** The ruins of Warsaw Archcathedral in 1945; photograph by Zdzisław Wdowiński; first published in *Spółdzielczy Instytut Wydawniczy "Kraj,"* 1950. Warsaw, National Library. Photo: Public domain.

deliberate strategy adopted by the PRL to obtain more funds for the reconstruction of the country (the largest foreign donor was the Soviet Union) and for reasons of propaganda, as repairing historic buildings was presented as the recovery of what the Nazis had deliberately destroyed.<sup>45</sup>

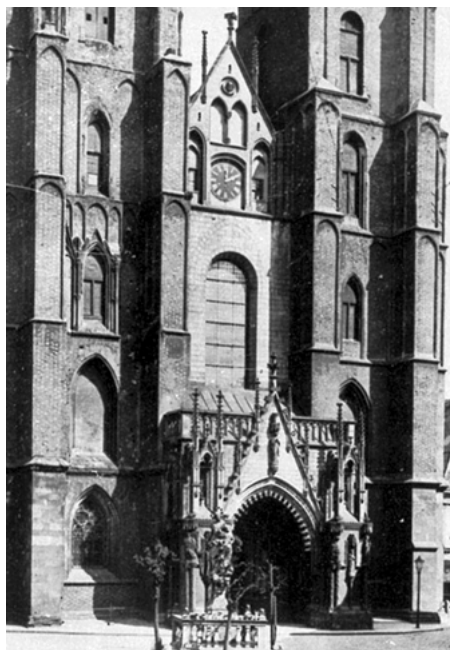
Of the many war-damaged Gothic churches restored in Wrocław, the cathedral was considered to be of emblematic significance.<sup>46</sup> The diocese of Wrocław had been established around the year 1000 by the first king of Poland, Bolesław I Chrobry (ca. 967–1025), who was also associated with the foundation of the first Polish ecclesiastical province, the archdiocese of Gniezno (of which Wrocław was a suffragan diocese). The pre-World War II cathedral was the result of an accumulation of different building layers, including a restoration campaign carried out between 1873 and 1875 when the city was part of the German empire. Again, the decision to restore the destroyed cathedral after World War II was not an obvious one in the young socialist state since, in addition to doubts about the feasibility of the restoration, the appropriateness of reviving a religious building was in play.<sup>47</sup> Between 1949 and 1951, archaeolog-

<sup>45</sup> Bolesław Bierut, *Der Sechsjahrplan des Wiederaufbaus von Warschau* (Warsaw: Książka u Wiedza, 1951), 24.

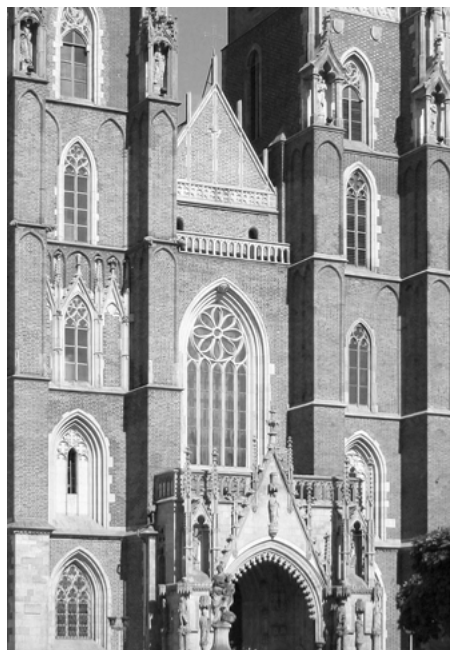
<sup>46</sup> Edmund Małachowicz, *Katedra Wrocławska* (Wrocław: Polska Akademia Nauk Oddz. we Wrocławiu, 2000), 173.

<sup>47</sup> Marcin Bukowski, *Katedra Wrocławska. Architektura* (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1962), 159.

ical examinations, which recovered remnants of the Romanesque building, were nevertheless carried out.<sup>48</sup> The scholarship of the time presented the anonymous medieval builders as having been local. No proof for this claim was offered, but the aim was to highlight the Polish character of the master builders and refute any possible German or Bohemian connection.<sup>49</sup>



**Fig. 6.5:** Wrocław, Cathedral, Western front before 1945. Photo: Public domain.



**Fig. 6.6:** Wrocław, Cathedral, Western front after reconstruction. Photo: Author.

Mainly financed by the state, the reconstruction project was led by the restoration architect Marcin Bukowski under the supervision of Zachwatowicz.<sup>50</sup> They added a new Gothic gable to the facade and a large window with tracery in place of the smaller rounded window that was there prior to the war (Figs. 6.5 and 6.6). These changes altered the entire western front, especially since the spires, built well after the Middle

<sup>48</sup> Günther Grundmann, *Dome, Kirchen und Klöster in Schlesien* (Frankfurt am Main: Weidlich, 1961), 121.

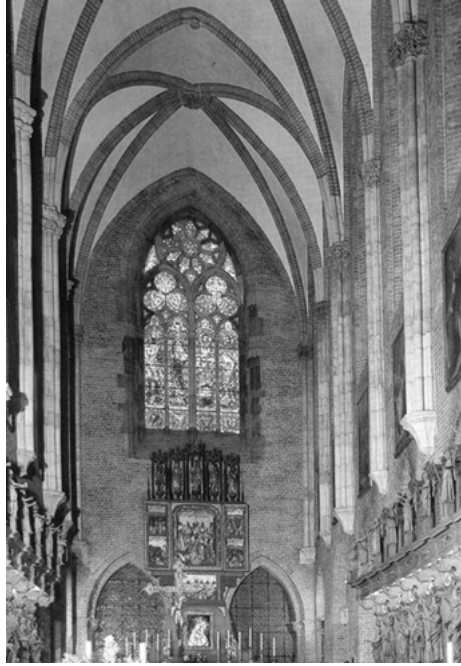
<sup>49</sup> Małachowicz, *Katedra Wrocławska*, 173.

<sup>50</sup> Protocol of 31 October 1949, Wrocław, Archiwum Państwowe we Wrocławiu, Akta WDO zlat 1945–1951, nr sygn. 133, p. 12. On Bukowski, see Zenon Prętczyński, *Wspomnienia o profesorach Wydziału Architektury Politechniki Wrocławskiej (z lat studiów 1947–1952)* (Wrocław: OWPW, 2005), 30–35.

Ages, were not reconstructed.<sup>51</sup> The interior, particularly the area around the choir, saw the largest intervention, as neo-Gothic additions such as the balusters above the choir stalls were taken down and the rebuilt vaults were given a more severe appearance (Figs. 6.7 and 6.8). In general, the reconstructed forms were simplified while the brick walls were left unplastered.<sup>52</sup>



**Fig. 6.7:** Wrocław, Cathedral, Chancel before 1945. Photo: Public domain.



**Fig. 6.8:** Wrocław, Cathedral, Chancel after reconstruction. Photo: Public domain.

These choices were common in the restoration of Gothic buildings in the PRL because the simpler features were interpreted as characteristic of Polish Gothic and contrasted with what was perceived to be the more ornate Gothic in Bohemia and neighboring parts of Germany. Even though the Duchy of Silesia during the fourteenth century came under Bohemian suzerainty (and Prussian during the eighteenth century), Wrocław Cathedral was considered the most notable example of Silesian and Polish archi-

<sup>51</sup> The present spires, elongated versions of the neo-Gothic spires, were constructed between 1989 and 1991; Małachowicz, *Katedra Wrocławska*, 171.

<sup>52</sup> Katarzyna Sonntag, “Der Fall Wrocław: Die Suche nach einer neuen Heimat und Identität,” in *Denkmal–Heimat–Identität: Denkmalpflege und Gesellschaft*, ed. Martina Ullrich (Dresden: Thelem, 2019), 80–93.

ture of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.<sup>53</sup> The postwar reconstruction was intended to underline its exemplary character as a Polish Gothic building, distinct from German or Bohemian models. This emphasis on the period when Silesia was undoubtedly Polish was particularly important for Silesian cities such as Wrocław. A clear indication that restoration politics were at work here is the fact that not all of the city's religious heritage received the same level of attention and care as the Gothic churches. Just as the restoration work on the cathedral started, Wrocław's ruined New Synagogue was cleared to make space for a parking lot for a nearby police station.<sup>54</sup>

Although the damage done to Poznań Cathedral was considerably less than to its counterpart in Wrocław, its reconstruction was more dramatic: it is a perfect example of what can be called re-Gothicization. "The German towers . . . so alien to the Polish spirit still stand, whereas Polish churches, including the cathedral, lie in ruins," wrote the architect Zbigniew Zielinski, later the city's director of planning and development, in a report about Poznań's situation on 8 August 1945.<sup>55</sup> Such an account, exaggerated as it may be, embodies the sentiment of the time, when German and Polish heritage were routinely juxtaposed and contrasted. Poznań's cathedral is closely associated with Mieszko I (ca. 930–92), the first historically documented member of the Piast dynasty and leader of a (mythical) sovereign Polish state, who likely founded the original church.<sup>56</sup> Both Mieszko and his son, Bolesław I Chrobry, were believed to have been buried there. Photographs from 1945 show fire damage to the roof and other limited damage to the interior, but the building was in relatively good condition apart from the facade.<sup>57</sup>

The current appearance of the cathedral is the result of the reconstruction carried out between 1948 and 1956 (Figs. 6.9 and 6.10).<sup>58</sup> As in Wrocław, the building consisted of various historical layers, including ones dating from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries; the restoration program opted for the recovery of that medieval fabric. It was understood that "against German theories," the cathedral "was not inspired by the German

53 Zygmunt Świechowski, *Architektura na Śląsku do połowy XIII wieku* (Warsaw: Budownictwo i Architektura, 1955).

54 Michael Meng, *Shattered Spaces: Encountering Jewish Ruins in Postwar Germany and Poland* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 137.

55 José M. Faraldo, "Medieval Socialist Artefacts: Architecture and Discourses of National Identity in Provincial Poland," in *Europe, Nationalism, Communism: Essays on Poland*, ed. Faraldo (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang GmbH, 2008), 13–39.

56 Szczepny Skibiński, "Królewski charakter katedry poznańskiej," in *W kręgu Katedry*, ed. Jacek Wierszowski (Poznań: KMP, 2003), 126–56.

57 A collection of historic images of the cathedral can be found on CYRYL, Wirtualne muzeum historii poznania, [https://cyryl.poznan.pl/items/search?page\\_num=2&per\\_page=400&sort\\_by=&title=Katedra&place=Poznan](https://cyryl.poznan.pl/items/search?page_num=2&per_page=400&sort_by=&title=Katedra&place=Poznan).

58 Szczepny Skibiński, *Katedra poznańska* (Poznań: Księgarnia Św Wojciecha, 2001).



**Fig. 6.9:** Poznań, Cathedral, Western front in the 1930s; photograph by Henryk Poddebski. Warsaw, National Library. Photo: Public domain.

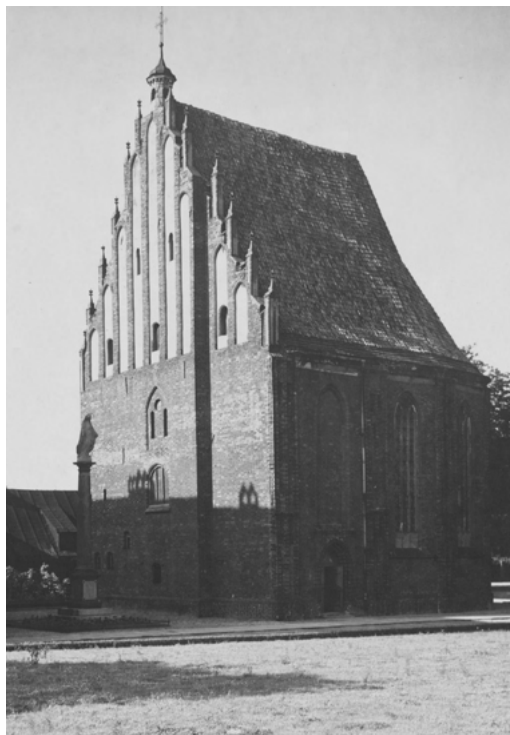


**Fig. 6.10:** Poznań, Cathedral, Western front after reconstruction. Photo: Author.

Gothic, nor even by Prague Cathedral, but had its own model.”<sup>59</sup> Scholars today might challenge this claim of artistic independence, but it was the assumption that guided the restoration. More than a renovation, then, this was a full-fledged rebuilding. Some notable changes to the neoclassical interior were the addition of a (hypothetical) triforium in the chevet and invented Gothic ribbed vaults.<sup>60</sup> These new vaults were set about a meter too high, however, and transformed the building’s original proportions. Also, some chapels of the ambulatory were adjusted by demolishing the existing vaults. This opened up the space to the (relic?) rooms above, creating lanterns illuminating the chancel and ambulatory; this involved the erasure of traces of former floor levels and communicating gaps between the chapel towers. During the reconstruction, some of the original structure was pulled down and rebuilt, a process that destroyed the actual medieval church that had emerged during the remodeling (although its appearance was fortunately captured in photos). Overall, the interventions produced an invented Gothic chevet, one that only partially rests on scientific evidence.

<sup>59</sup> Jerzy Ros, “Poznańskie refleksje,” *Życie Warszawy Gazeta*, 8 April 1948, 3.

<sup>60</sup> Andrzej Kuszelski, “Prezbiterium katedry poznańskiej: Rekonstrukcja faz, układ, związki i wpływy,” in Wiesiołowski, *W kręgu Katedry*, 157–78.



**Fig. 6.11:** Poznań, St. Mary's Chapel on Cathedral Island; photograph by Henryk Poddębski. Warsaw, National Library. Photo: Public domain.

The transformation of the main facade, which had been most damaged, was even more drastic. There were attempts to go back to the oldest stages, but hardly enough remained to recover the Gothic building. Instead, the new front towers were modeled after those at Gniezno; the gable, meanwhile, echoed brick Gothic religious buildings of the vicinity, in particular a nearby chapel (Fig. 6.11). The towers posed particular problems for the restorers; sketches and a model show considerable variations.<sup>61</sup> Ultimately, they opted for roofs inspired by an eighteenth-century drawing of the facade. Interestingly, the decision to have these copper roofs in a later architectural style than the Gothic brick work created what was to become a common Polish hybrid, linking the appearance of Poznań cathedral with analogous religious buildings in Kraków, Gniezno, and elsewhere.

Of all the ecclesiastical buildings covered in this essay, the most badly damaged was St. John's Archcathedral in Warsaw, which basically had been razed to the

<sup>61</sup> An interesting sketch dated 1949 from the archive of the city conservator can be found at <https://cyryl.poznan.pl/content/archive/623/10KjfpI4WazEU9i4ZcBm.jpg>.

ground in 1944 (see Fig. 6.4). Admittedly not of the greatest architectural importance, this was, at its core, a brick Gothic hall church of the late fourteenth century that had been used by the medieval Piast dukes of Mazovia as their castle chapel and mausoleum. The prewar condition of the building was the result of a thoroughgoing restoration project carried out by Adam Idzkowski between 1837 and 1842 in a neo-Gothic style (Fig. 6.12).<sup>62</sup>



**Fig. 6.12:** Warsaw, Archcathedral, Western front before 1939; photograph by Henryk Poddebski. Warsaw, National Library. Photo: Public domain.

After the Second World War, the state's general conservator Zachwatowicz directed its reconstruction, which began in 1947 and was extremely well funded, especially considering the more pressing needs for functional structures such as housing.<sup>63</sup> This reconstruction can also be classed as a re-Gothicization (Fig. 6.13).

<sup>62</sup> Tadeusz Zagrodzki, *Gotycka architektura katedry Św. Jana w Warszawie* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo DiG, 2000), 6.

<sup>63</sup> Maria I. Kwiatkowska, *Katedra św. Jana* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1978). There were several allocations of funds for the reconstruction of Warsaw's main churches in the pe-



**Fig. 6.13:** Warsaw, Archcathedral during reconstruction, ca. 1950; photograph by Alfred Funkiewicz (?) first published in *Spółdzielczy Instytut Wydawniczy "Kraj,"* 1950. Warsaw, National Library. Photo: Public domain.

For example, a high-gabled roof was rebuilt to make the building dominate the skyline of the historic city. The most interesting intervention, however, concerns once again the main facade. Initial proposals ranged from rebuilding the nineteenth-century neo-Gothic facade to the construction of an entirely new and conjectural Gothic tower.<sup>64</sup> Ultimately, a proposal for a brick Gothic style was adopted (Fig. 6.14). But rather than a reconstruction rooted in scholarly evidence, it was an interpretation of how the gable *could* have looked, based on other Gothic churches and cathedrals found across Poland.<sup>65</sup> Nonetheless, the cathedral facade is now held to exemplify *narodowego* (national style) and offers a telling glimpse into the complexities of restoration practices in the 1950s.<sup>66</sup>

It was not only the fabric of Gothic religious buildings that was recovered. Church interiors were also restored, but in a way that could serve as display spaces for local

riod 1947–56, on which see Józef Sigalin, *Warszawa 1944–1980: z archiwum architekta* (Warsaw: PIW, 1986), 2: 404–10.

<sup>64</sup> Several design proposals are held in Warsaw, Warsaw University of Technology, Faculty of Architecture collection.

<sup>65</sup> See the resemblance to the facade of the Church of SS. Stanislas, Dorothea, and Wenceslas in Wrocław, as noted by Kwiatkowska, *Katedra św. Jana*, 224.

<sup>66</sup> Marek Walczak, *Kościóły Gotyckie w Polsce* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo M, 2016), 170–76.





**Fig. 6.14:** Warsaw, Archcathedral of St. John, Western front. Photo: Author.

art production from the Gothic period. Often that entailed removing, relocating, or even demolishing existing objects. The destroyed choir of Wrocław Cathedral, for example, was reconfigured by bringing in a late Gothic carved wooden altarpiece from a church in Lubin (Lower Silesia) and choir stalls from another church in Wrocław.<sup>67</sup> In Poznań, the main altar of the cathedral was, despite limited fire damage, completely dismantled in an intervention that also destroyed a substantial part of the eighteenth-century interior by the architect Ephraim Szreger. The neoclassical altar was replaced by a late Gothic carved altarpiece brought in 1952 from a church in Góra Śląska in the recovered territories of Silesia (Figs. 6.15 and 6.16). And early photographs of the reconstructed cathedral in Warsaw show what appears to be a Gothic wooden altarpiece in the choir.<sup>68</sup> This kind of reassembly of church interiors was common.

This process of the museumization of Gothic churches continued even after the radical phase of the PRL was over, as is shown by St. James's Church in Szczecin (Stettin) in Pomerania. Not only is this another example of the conversion of a Lutheran into a Cath-

<sup>67</sup> Małachowicz, *Katedra Wrocławska*. The wooden altarpiece was replaced in 2019 by the silver *Jerin Altarpiece* made by Nitch and Fichtenberger in 1591 that had adorned the chancel before 1945.

<sup>68</sup> See the photographic comparison of the ruined and rebuilt cathedral interior in Adolf Ciborowski, *Warschau: Zerstörung und Wiederaufbau der Stadt* (Warsaw: Interpress, 1969), 90



**Fig. 6.15:** Augustyn Schoeps, Main altar in the chancel in 1945, Poznań Cathedral. Poznań Municipal Publishing House. Photo: CYRYL: Poznań Virtual History Museum (public domain).



**Fig. 6.16:** Poznań, Cathedral, Interior looking towards the chancel after reconstruction. Photo: Wikimedia Commons/David Castor (CC 1.0 Generic).

olic place of worship, but also of a redecoration relying on relocated Gothic religious works of art supposedly made by local craftsmen. Pomerania's anonymous altarpieces were ascribed to Polish workshops despite their clear Netherlandish characteristics.<sup>69</sup> The most extraordinary case is the church's main altarpiece, which is a modern assembly of several elements believed to have been created in local workshops (Fig. 6.17).

The presence of such objects arguably makes the reconstructed building more a museum to Pomeranian Gothic art than a place of worship. An interesting counterpoint to this trend is Hans Memling's famous *Last Judgement* triptych (1467–71). It had been in St. Mary's Church in Gdańsk since the fifteenth century, but, after the Second World War, was taken to the Soviet Union for a decade; when it was returned to Gdańsk, it went back not to St. Mary's but to the city's branch of the National Museum. Similarly, the late Gothic *St. Reinhold Altar* by Jan de Molder and Joos van Cleve was relocated from the same church in the same years to the National Museum in Warsaw. It is likely that both altarpieces were transferred from St. Mary's to the nation's most important museum because they were documented examples of Netherlandish art.<sup>70</sup> They (and many others) illustrate how medieval art found in Polish churches

<sup>69</sup> See for example Mossakowski, "Art in Poland," 148.

<sup>70</sup> Wojciech Bonisławski "Sąd Ostateczny' w muzeum czy w kościele?", *Wyborcza*, 26 April 2019. The *St Reinhold Altarpiece* was made in an Antwerp workshop; its painted wings are by Joos van Cleve.



Fig. 6.17: Szczecin, St. James's Church, Main altar. Photo: Author.

that could not be reinterpreted as local productions (and thus potential national patrimony) ended up in museums, especially the National Museum in Warsaw.

Typically, restorations of Gothic churches and cathedrals in the PRL were intended to recover the authentic medieval architectural fabric. St. Mary's Church in Gdańsk offers a good illustration of how the concept of authenticity was understood at the time; it also demonstrates how Gothic brick churches were reframed and reinterpreted. The examples from Warsaw and Poznań lie at the other end of the spectrum of approaches to reconstruction. There, the interventions did not recover the buildings as they had been before the war damage, but relied instead on the creative ingenuity of architects and their assumptions of how the buildings could have been; or, perhaps more accurately, how they *should* have been. This restoration practice—the re-Gothicization, as I have called it—of war-damaged religious buildings remains contested in preservationist circles, but it was not uncommon in Europe at the time. One need only look to the Church of St. Michael in Hildesheim for another striking example in Western Europe of a similarly dramatic postwar reconstruction.<sup>71</sup> But there is an essential difference: the particular political motivation for the restorations in the PRL, a question to which I now turn.

<sup>71</sup> See Hartwig Beseler, "Der Wiederaufbau der Hildesheimer Michaeliskirche nach Kriegszerstörung," in *Rekonstruktion in der Denkmalpflege: Überlegungen-Definitionen-Erfahrungsberichte*, ed. Juliane Kirschbaum and Annegret Klein (Bonn: Deutsches Nationalkomitee für Denkmalschutz, 1998), 64–70.

## No Myth, No Nation

Why, one must ask, were Gothic Catholic churches restored in the PRL and why was this done by a socialist state despite the buildings' religious character and the association of the Gothic style with Germany? The Polish Communist Party, the main initiator and sponsor of the restorations I have been discussing, understood that it needed a myth to rebuild the nation after the war. The Polish myth that best served its interests was the so-called *koncepcja piastowska* (Piast concept). Representing a mystical union of nation and territory, it had been developed in the early twentieth century in opposition to what was known as the Jagiellonian concept. This, the leading historiographical notion during the Second Polish Republic, favored an understanding of the nation as multiethnic and multireligious.<sup>72</sup> But in 1945, the Polish Communist Party, supported by Stalin, adopted the Piast concept, which was rooted in the legendary belief in an ancient Polish nation living in harmony and unity under the rule of a peasant son named Piast.<sup>73</sup> The reality is that, before 1945, Poland had been a multinational state composed of numerous ethnic minorities; the PRL, on the other hand, saw itself as the first Polish state to be ethnically homogenous and the Piast concept provided an excellent (if fictitious) opportunity to define the nation's characteristics as well as its territorial boundaries.<sup>74</sup> Soon, maps were drawn demonstrating that the borders of the new state coincided with the lands of the early medieval Piast princes.<sup>75</sup>

The state assigned scholars a clearly defined task: provide historical legitimacy to the new political order. The Piast concept served this task well, for it held that the Poles had been robbed of their "inheritance" and lost the control over their native lands with the arrival of alien peoples, such as Germans, Jews, and Ukrainians. In support of this historical claim, art historians during the PRL pointed out that different ethnic groups with their own artistic traditions had lived in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1569–1795).<sup>76</sup> Accordingly, historic buildings could be classed as Polish, German, Jewish, or Ukrainian.<sup>77</sup> But it was the research of medievalists, in particular, that could be used to connect the Piast concept to modern Poland. Historians

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<sup>72</sup> Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland's Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 323–27; Norman Davies, *Polish National Mythologies* (New Britain: Central Connecticut State University, 1998).

<sup>73</sup> Davies, *Polish National Mythologies*.

<sup>74</sup> Maciej Górny, *Przed wszystkim ma być naród: Marksistowskie historiografie w Europie Środkowo-Wschodni* (Warsaw: TRIO, 2007).

<sup>75</sup> Davies, *Polish National Mythologies*, 20.

<sup>76</sup> So, for example, Stanislas Mossakowski wrote in 1973: "The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth . . . was inhabited [sic] by Poles, Lithuanians, Ruthenians and Byelorussians as well as by other immigrant groups: Germans, Armenians and Jews, each of which possessed and tried to uphold different artistic traditions." Mossakowski, "Art in Poland," 145.

<sup>77</sup> Julia Roos, *Das multikulturelle bauliche Erbe: Denkmalpflege und Wiederaufbau in Polen von 1944 bis 1956: Beispiele aus Stettin und Lublin* (Hamburg: Diplomica, 2010).

went back to the early and High Middle Ages to find historical backing to substantiate Polish claims to territories regained after the Second World War (Pomerania, parts of Silesia, and the city of Gdańsk) that were a particular challenge to integrate into the new Polish state.<sup>78</sup> They emphasized that Silesia had been one of the core regions of the early Polish nation and that Pomerania lay within its political influence. In a similar fashion, the medieval relations between Poland and the Teutonic Order were treated as a metaphor for modern Polish-German relations, with the Polish victory in the Battle of Grunwald-Tannenberg in 1410 seen as an apogee that presaged the post-1945 situation.<sup>79</sup> The restoration of a unified Polish kingdom in the early fourteenth century was taken as another important historical precedent, and, in this case, architecture was given a crucial part to play.<sup>80</sup> The reign of King Casimir the Great (r. 1333–70), in particular, was summed up with the saying that the sovereign had acquired a wooden Poland and rebuilt it in stone.<sup>81</sup> Gothic buildings begun under his rule stood as tangible confirmations of this axiom because they replaced earlier buildings, some of them in wood. This was notably the case for Warsaw's cathedral which was rebuilt in stone in the fourteenth century. In socialist Poland, then, the Middle Ages were portrayed as a period of national triumph.

The Piast concept also needed tangible representation. But that patrimony was lacking since buildings from the tenth to the twelfth centuries were almost nonexistent. The collegiate church at Tarnobrzeg and the Cieszyń Rotunda are exceptions and, unsurprisingly, both of these religious buildings were meticulously reconstructed during the radical era of the PRL. But those were unusual survivals. Instead, it was Gothic ecclesiastical buildings that best served the state's desire to deemphasize Poland's multi-ethnic and multi-religious past in order to promote the anticipated national unity. They survived in sufficient numbers and could be reinterpreted to represent a nation untouched by foreign influences. Gothic cathedrals and churches became the visible symbol of the Piast concept; and it was as the embodiment of this idea that they could function as a national patrimony useful for the socialist Polish state. In Warsaw's reconstructed stone archcathedral, for example, the tomb of the last medieval Piast dukes of Mazovia was given a prominent location. Moreover, the resemblance between the building's facade and that of St. Dorothea's Church in Wrocław, personally founded by Casimir the Great, was understood to be intentional.<sup>82</sup> The high point of the use of medieval buildings to establish a national identity is likely Poznań Cathedral. As the alleged burial site of Mieszko I and Bolesław Chrobry, this monument is even more

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78 Jürgen Heide, "Introduction to the Medieval Section: Imaginations and Configurations," in *Imaginations and Configurations of Polish Society: From the Middle Ages through the Twentieth Century*, ed. Yvonne Kleinmann (Göttingen, Wallstein, 2017), 37–45.

79 Heide, "Introduction," 39.

80 Heide, "Introduction," 40.

81 Kazimierz Tymieniecki, *Polska w średniowieczu* (Warsaw: PWN, 1961), 120–50.

82 See, for example, Kwiatkowska, *Katedra św. Jana*, 224.

closely related to the first Piast princes who were seen to mark the beginning of Polish nationhood. Yet since Poznań was the capital of the Prussian province of Posen during the partition era, it had also been a distinct example of Germanization.<sup>83</sup> This made the city a particularly fraught location; the re-Gothicization of the cathedral to unparalleled levels must be understood as the result of a desire to construct a counterpart to another of the city's most important buildings, the German imperial castle and the foreign cultural imperialism it represented.<sup>84</sup>

The problem of religion remained a challenge, however, and one can say that the PRL tried to shape national identity through the religious built heritage but detached from religion itself. In his introduction to *Churches in Poland*, published in 1966, a year of national celebrations, Zachwatowicz made clear that restoring churches was foremost an act of cultural history, given that it revived heritage destroyed by the Nazi fascists. While the nation may have clad itself outwardly in forms of Gothic religious architecture, a new society was nonetheless in the process of emerging, one based on socialist doctrines. The result of this historical process was reconstructions that are more than attempts to bring back buildings dating to a certain period or serving a religious purpose. The facades of the cathedrals of Poznań and Warsaw (see Figs. 6.11 and 6.16) are a hybrid of Gothic and modern forms, not a restoration properly speaking (as in Wrocław). As such, they can be seen as deliberate attempts to preserve the memory of destruction through reconstruction. It was important for the nation to understand that the Polish heritage had been under attack by foreign forces and then rebuilt by the socialist leaders.

According to Zachwatowicz, what should be reconstructed were elements from the past that could be considered valuable, rather than what existed directly prior to the destruction.<sup>85</sup> For him, and for the socialist regime, the buildings that have been the subject of this essay were unambiguously Catholic and therefore opposed to the Lutheran *Kirche* or the Russian Orthodox *cerkiew*. Furthermore, these cathedrals and churches had been constructed in a Gothic style that could be associated with the sovereign rule of the Piast dynasty. As a reaction to the Lutheran and German assault from the west, on the one hand, and the Orthodox and Russian assault from the east, on the other, the reconstruction of Gothic or Catholic churches became a vehicle to affirm national pride. A reconstructed Gothic church could simultaneously represent the past and the present: it symbolized both the historic sovereign nation under the Piasts *and* the modern socialist state as defender and heir to the Polish legacy.

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<sup>83</sup> Pszczółkowski, "Architecture as a Tool."

<sup>84</sup> For the German use of architecture in Poznań to express a political position, see the contribution by Bernd Carqué in this volume.

<sup>85</sup> Jan Zachwatowicz, *Ochrona zabytków w Polsce* (Warsaw: Polonia, 1965), 46.

## Aftermath

The landscape of religious buildings that emerged during the reconstruction period after the Second World War was very different from the one when Poland had regained independence in November 1918. After 1945, a nation was created with an almost homogeneous religious character. Built traces of centuries of Judaism in the Polish territories had largely been erased between 1938 and 1945. The presence of neo-Byzantine Russian Orthodox and neo-Gothic Lutheran religious buildings had also been significantly reduced in a process that had already begun during the First World War. In short, what emerged during the post-1945 reconstruction era was a landscape of Gothic, Catholic, and, therefore, *Polish* churches and cathedrals, seemingly untouched by the consequences of the Lutheran Reformation or the partitions by its imperialist neighbors Prussia and Russia.

It was in the 1960s that the myth of the Piasts reached its pinnacle with state-organized celebrations commemorating the “Millennium of the Polish State” (*Tysiąclecie Państwa Polskiego*). The Catholic Church, in its opposition to the socialist, secular state, seized the opportunity to celebrate its own millennial commemoration, the “Baptism of Poland.”<sup>86</sup> This event commemorated Mieszko I’s adoption of Christianity in 966, but used his individual baptism as a metaphor to represent the moment when Poland had entered the stage of history as a sovereign state.<sup>87</sup> Soon after, the Church was able to position itself, rather than the socialist regime in Warsaw, as the true heir to the Piast (that is, Polish) legacy. Cardinal Wyszyński played a vital role in the celebrations, seizing the occasion to emphasize the historical (meaning Catholic) character of the Polish nation. Simply put, the Church was becoming the main opponent to the socialist regime. Ultimately, the 1978 election of Cardinal Wojtyła of Kraków as Pope John Paul II succeeded in creating a sense of national unity and an increasingly organized political opposition to socialism.<sup>88</sup> The medieval religious buildings reconstructed by the early socialist state unexpectedly turned into Trojan horses and became one of the key foundations from which resistance against the totalitarian state was waged, ultimately helping to overthrow the PRL.

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<sup>86</sup> Davies, *God’s Playground*, 413–81.

<sup>87</sup> Stanisław Rosik, “The ‘Baptism of Poland’: Power, Institution and Theology in the Shaping of Monarchy and Society from the Tenth through Twelfth Centuries,” in Kleinmann, *Imaginations and Configurations*, 46–53.

<sup>88</sup> Jan Rydel, “Sacrum Poloniae Millennium: Bemerkungen zur Anatomie eines Konflikts im ‘realen Sozialismus,’” in *Der Kampf um das Gedächtnis: Öffentliche Gedenktage in Mitteleuropa*, ed. Emil Brix and Hannes Stekl (Vienna: Böhlau, 1997), 231–50.





Kevin D. Murphy

## Notre-Dame and National Unity: From the July Monarchy to the Twenty-First Century



**Fig. 7.1:** Notre-Dame in Paris in flames, viewed from the Quai des Augustins, 15 April 2019. Photo: Milliped/Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 4.0).

Even as the Gothic cathedral of Paris was still burning in 2019 (Fig. 7.1), French President Emmanuel Macron declared that “Notre-Dame is our history, our literature, part of our psyche, the place of all our great events, our epidemics, our wars, our liberations, the epicenter of our lives.” Not only did Macron thereby assert the absolute centrality of the cathedral to French cultural, political, and psychological life, but also, when he referred to “epidemics,” inadvertently foreshadowed the coming global public health crisis—the COVID-19 pandemic—that would stall reconstruction of the

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**Note:** My thanks go to Margaret Laster for her assistance in researching this article.

building (Macron undoubtedly was thinking of the nineteenth-century cholera outbreaks that had a disproportionate impact on the working-class population of the Île de la Cité neighborhood that surrounded the cathedral). Moreover, President Macron claimed Notre-Dame, a place of Christian worship, as a monument of and to the French people as a whole, one which had been deeply inscribed in the soil and in national identity over the *longue durée*: “Let’s be proud, because we built this cathedral more than eight hundred years ago, we’ve built it and, throughout the centuries, let it grow and improved it. So I solemnly say tonight: we will rebuild it together.”<sup>1</sup>

Macron’s perspective on Notre-Dame conceived of the building as a preeminently secular monument, not a religious one. He furthermore sketched its history as one of continual organic improvement, rather than the process of periodic intentional alteration, repair, neglect, destruction, and renovation that actually characterized the means by which it has come down to the present. Most significantly, when Macron imagined the cathedral’s projected restoration as a collective effort in which the French people would act “together,” he echoed arguments for Notre-Dame’s reconstruction that had been made in the nineteenth century. As this essay will demonstrate, the restoration of Notre-Dame in the 1840s and ’50s was likewise promoted on the grounds that the cathedral was the foremost French monument that embodied the cultural identity of France.

The national, secular conception of Notre-Dame on which Macron’s commentary rested (and which he seemed to take for granted) would have been unthinkable if not for the cathedral’s nineteenth-century history. Although from its inception the building had had strong associations with secular authority, it was in the mid-nineteenth century, at the moment of its first major restoration under the direction of architects Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc (1814–79) and Jean-Baptiste Lassus (1807–57), that Notre-Dame was definitively reconceptualized as a monument to the longevity of the French nation rather than to the glory of the Catholic church and cult. At that point, its religious functions and meanings were given correspondingly less weight in the official justifications for the funding bills that enabled the project to go forward. This first systematic restoration, which began in 1840, followed in the wake of a series of cataclysmic political events in France: the Revolution of the late eighteenth century, the establishment of the Napoleonic empire and its demise in 1814, and the subsequent political restoration of the Bourbon monarchy and its respective collapse at the time of the 1830 Revolution which eventually put King Louis-Philippe (r. 1830–48) on the throne of the liberal monarchy.<sup>2</sup>

1 Quoted in “French President Macron: ‘We’ll Rebuild Notre-Dame Together,’” *Reuters*, 15 April 2019; <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-notredame-macron/french-president-macron-well-rebuild-notre-dame-together-idUSKCN1RR2E5>.

2 On Lassus and the restoration project see Jean-Michel Leniaud, *Jean-Baptiste Lassus, 1807–1857, ou, Les temps retrouvés des cathédrales* (Geneva: Droz, 1980); Michael Camille, *The Gargoyles of Notre-Dame: Medievalism and the Monsters of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 3–50;

Similarly, the current restoration followed the fire, which came at a moment of extreme political division in France. As architectural historian Aron Vinegar wrote, “the burning of Notre-Dame has operated as a symbolic quilting point for a ‘unified’ French Nation precisely at the moment when it is at its most antagonistic and divided state.”<sup>3</sup> The period of Macron’s presidency, which began in May 2017, was characterized, as Vinegar suggests, by extreme polarization, evidenced by the *Gilets jaunes* (Yellow Vests) protests that began in November 2018 in opposition to proposed fuel taxes. Those national protests, in which many participants wore yellow safety vests, grew into an opposition to the perceived partiality of Macron to the wealthy and to business interests.<sup>4</sup> Seen against the backdrop of these highly publicized protests and other evidence of factionalization, Macron’s call for a collective restoration project could be seen as politically expedient, as Vinegar suggested. To maximize support for the effort by making it appeal to the broadest spectrum of French society, Macron necessarily had to minimize the relationship between Notre-Dame and Catholicism, just as his nineteenth-century predecessors had when they sought financial resources to restore the cathedral.

This brief comparison of the two moments at which major restorations of Notre-Dame were embarked upon—1840 and 2019—demonstrates the degree to which the cathedral has served during the modern period as a rallying point for advocates of political and social cohesion in times of extreme polarization in France. As critics have pointed out, both in the nineteenth century and at the contemporary moment, using Notre-Dame as an image of stasis risks underrepresenting those points in the past when it in fact occasioned conflict and dynamic change, if not actual revolution. Indeed, the nineteenth-century restoration, which erased evidence of political conflict, can be seen as part of a larger movement to make the monuments of France speak to a highly selective, consensual history. As this essay will show, that popular project nonetheless had its detractors, even in the nineteenth century, who believed that the restoration would actually rob the building of its historic character. In 2019, construing the Gothic cathedral as the product of a unified secular nation was something that could only be achieved because nineteenth-century critics and restorers were so effective in reshaping the meaning of the building, both through physical reconstruction and by rewriting its history in texts, transforming it into an icon of an enduring notion of Frenchness largely divorced from religion and political strife. This article will focus on the nineteenth-century history of Notre-Dame and, especially, on

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Kevin D. Murphy, *The Cathedral of Notre-Dame of Paris: A Quick Immersion* (New York: Tibidabo Publishing, 2020), 124–56.

3 Aron Vinegar, “In Flagrante: On Some Burning Questions for Restoration,” *Future Anterior* 17, no. 1 (Summer 2020): 1–16, at 11.

4 Angelique Chrisafis, “Who are the Gilets Jaunes and what do they want?,” *The Guardian* 7 December 2018.

the moment of its restoration beginning in the 1840s, when its centrality to national identity was cemented.

When Macron made reference to the cathedral's eight-hundred-year history, he was alluding to the construction that began in 1163 on or near the possible sites of a Roman-era temple and four earlier Christian churches. That process resulted in the cathedral that continued to be transformed up until the time of its major nineteenth-century restoration. The historical figure most prominently associated with the definitive construction of Notre-Dame in the Gothic style was Maurice de Sully, bishop of Paris from 1160 until his death in 1196. His grand vision for a metropolitan cathedral that would rival in scale and sophistication the nearby Gothic abbey church of Saint-Denis shaped the construction at Notre-Dame, which continued into the first half of the thirteenth century. The facade and nave, which had both been begun earlier, were joined between about 1210 and 1220; the famed Gallery of Kings was installed above the portals of the facade in 1220; and, by 1245, the two facade towers had been completed to their current levels.<sup>5</sup>

That is not to say that the building was complete by the mid-thirteenth century, for the twelfth-century construction continued to be altered and expanded after that time. A noteworthy change to the Gothic structure was the reworking of the nave elevation in the 1220s, which took it from four to three stories and expanded the clerestory windows, thereby increasing its sense of height and making the interior more light filled. Similarly, the original double-span flying buttresses were then replaced with single-span flyers. Chapels were added between the buttresses on a piecemeal basis into the early fourteenth century, additions that were contemporary with ongoing work to the transepts.<sup>6</sup> Not only was the cathedral itself transformed over time; the surrounding buildings of the complex (including the now-vanished archbishop's palace to the south, between the nave and the Seine River) underwent parallel processes of construction and reconstruction, while the urban setting was also developed, especially with the establishment of the broad parvis in front of Notre-Dame.

The general decline, from the Renaissance onward, in the appreciation for the Gothic style weakened respect for the medieval fabric at Notre-Dame; hence, a number of alterations were made to the building during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that introduced classicizing elements. Indeed, the appearance of the interior was fundamentally altered through the removal of the Gothic altar and choir stalls, the installation of Doric columns in the apse, the whitewashing of walls, the installation of new pavement, and the replacement of some of the medieval stained glass by clear glazing (Fig. 7.2).<sup>7</sup> On the exterior, significant changes were made by the neoclassical architect Jacques-Germain Soufflot, who, in 1771, removed the column

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<sup>5</sup> Murphy, *Cathedral of Notre-Dame*, 40–66.

<sup>6</sup> William W. Clark et al., "Notre-Dame de Paris (Cathedral)," Grove Art Online, published 10 October 2022.

<sup>7</sup> Murphy, *Cathedral of Notre-Dame*, 110–12.



**Fig. 7.2:** Ferdinand Delamonce and Antoine Hérisset, *Grand Autel de Notre Dame*, from Germain Brice, *Nouvelle Description de la Ville de Paris et de tout ce qu'elle contient de plus remarquable* (Paris: J. M. Gandouin et al., 1925). New York Public Library. Photo: Public Domain Archive (CC 1.0 Generic).

that divided the central portal on the west facade and surmounted the door with a pointed arch that disturbed the original tympanum sculpture in that location.<sup>8</sup>

A period of deliberate destruction followed during the Revolution, when the properties of the church, monarchy, and aristocracy were nationalized. In conformity with official measures to eliminate royal iconography from public buildings, in 1792 the crowns were removed from the twenty-eight figures of the Kings of Judea and Israel located in the famed Gallery of Kings on the cathedral's facade. A year later, the kings were decapitated and removed entirely per the orders of the council of the city of Paris (see Fig. 1.2). The interior was virtually emptied as it was transformed from a place of Christian worship to a Temple of Reason. Most notably, the spire—which had experienced structural issues earlier—was ordered removed in 1792 and would not be replaced until late in the mid-nineteenth-century restoration campaign.<sup>9</sup> In the context of state-ordered destruction, or “vandalism” as it was known (the word was

<sup>8</sup> Jean-Marie Pérouse de Montclos, “Soufflot autour de Notre-Dame,” in *Autour de Notre-Dame*, ed. Action artistique de la ville de Paris (Paris: Action artistique de la ville de Paris, 2003), 180–82.

<sup>9</sup> François Souchal, *Le vandalisme de la Révolution* (Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Latines, 1993), 31–41.

coined in the revolutionary era), saving works of art or architecture that had resulted from royal or ecclesiastical patronage depended upon their being conceptually untangled from the abolished institutions and reconsidered as the material manifestations of French national artistic genius. This effort is often found epitomized in the establishment of the Musée des Monuments Français in 1790, in the former convent of the Petits-Augustins in Paris by Alexandre Lenoir (1761–1839). As its director, Lenoir gathered there fragments of buildings and works of art from nationalized properties that he argued transcended their royal or ecclesiastic pedigrees by virtue of their artistic worth and connection to the national past: “Because of [Lenoir’s] rather typical Enlightenment belief that progress in the arts reflected the progress of society and civilization in general, the progress of French history was the true lesson to be learned at the Musée des monuments français.”<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the museum offered the opportunity for visitors to experience the nation’s history in carefully designed spaces that used distinctive architectural features to present particular moments in the historical past. Those moments were not only illustrated: “They were felt.”<sup>11</sup> The same immersive experience of history was offered in the historic buildings that were eventually restored across France. The romantic movement brought new attention to the ways that buildings, particularly those of the Middle Ages, could provoke emotions in those who moved through them. This belief in the ability of architecture to create inspiring spatial experiences, not only to illustrate the past but also to provide an enveloping and emotionally touching sense of it, underwrote the government’s nineteenth-century investment in historic preservation.

Following the revolutionary period, Emperor Napoleon I laid symbolic claim to Notre-Dame with his coronation at the cathedral in 1804. Thereafter followed several attempts to restore the building, although because of the lack of knowledge of medieval architecture on the part of those government architects who were entrusted with the project during the Empire and subsequent Restoration, very little actual repair was accomplished. Further deliberate destruction of the complex took place during the early July Monarchy, notably with the sack of the archbishop’s palace during the days known as the *trois glorieuses* (27–29 July 1830), which ultimately led to its being razed.<sup>12</sup>

The competition for the restoration of Notre-Dame, which was conducted by the national government between 1842 and 1844, signaled that the administration of the Catholic church was taking a new approach to the repair of historic buildings. The 1801 concordat between the government of Napoleon I and the papacy recognized Catholicism as the majority religion of the French people; consequently, the national

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<sup>10</sup> Christopher M. Greene, “Alexandre Lenoir and the Musée des Monuments Français during the French Revolution,” *French Historical Studies* 12 (Autumn 1981): 200–222, at 219.

<sup>11</sup> Andrew M. Shanken, *The Everyday Life of Memorials* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022), 297.

<sup>12</sup> An 1831 drawing by John Scarlett Davis (1804–45), *Remains of the Archbishop’s Palace* (London, Tate Gallery, Oppé Collection T10562), shows the damaged building prior to its demolition.

government assumed responsibility for supporting the church financially.<sup>13</sup> A separate architectural service was set up to maintain the buildings used by the church, the priorities of which were to provide suitable facilities for religious practice. By the 1840s, mounting failures in the realm of restoration by classicists working on behalf of the church administration or other government architectural services had begun to shift opinion within the administration toward the employment of restoration architects with specific interests and training in medieval French architecture. In particular, this was a result of the actions of Prosper Mérimée (1803–70), named inspector general of historic monuments in 1834, who was a champion of Eugène Viollet-le-Duc. Even before the competition for the Notre-Dame restoration began, administrators imagined that the project would be “great and national” and that its results would be “worthy of the government.”<sup>14</sup> The word choice here significantly skirts direct references to religion, or to any particular political regime, and instead ties the project to a generalized, transhistorical concept of the nation.

At the same time, the 1831 publication of Victor Hugo’s famed Gothic novel, *Notre-Dame de Paris*, contributed to the growing preservation movement of the 1830s and ’40s and connected medieval architecture with the sensibilities and themes of romantic literature. As both a novelist and activist on behalf of historic monuments, Hugo helped to create a cultural and intellectual atmosphere in which Gothic architecture could be celebrated outside of its associations with religion or the institution of the Catholic church. This conceptual shift was manifested in the development of a secular government administration charged with overseeing historic buildings, including those that had religious functions.<sup>15</sup> Shortly after the July Revolution, in October 1830, Ludovic Vitet (1802–73) was appointed the first inspector general of historic monuments, a post he held until Mérimée took over three years later. The Commission des Monuments Historiques was created several years after that as an advisory group for the inspector general. The fact that this agency could exert authority over historic religious buildings was a consequence of their reconceptualization, in which Hugo played an important role. As Stephen G. Nichols wrote, Hugo’s *Notre-Dame de Paris* “dramatize[d] the rethinking of the cathedral as a religious symbol, on the one hand, while illustrating the need to recuperate it as a secular artifact.”<sup>16</sup> The existence of two parallel architectural administrations with claims to authority over historic religious buildings produced a certain amount of conflict between the personnel in the different agencies.

13 Peter C. Hodgson and Robert F. Brown, *Church and Theology in the Nineteenth Century* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2018), 21.

14 Directeur des Cultes (Culte Catholique), “Rapport au Ministre [de la Justice et des Cultes] (M. Marin du Nord),” July, 1842, Paris, Archives nationales (hereafter cited as AN), F/19/7803.

15 Richard Wittman, “Churches and States (Updated),” *Future Anterior* 17, no. 1 (Summer 2020): 31–32.

16 Stephen G. Nichols, “‘Le livre tuera l’édifice’: Resignifying Gothic Architecture,” in *Autobiography, History, Rhetoric: A Festschrift in Honor of Frank P. Bowman*, ed. Mary Donaldson-Evans, Lucienne Frapier-Mazur, and Gerald Prince (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), 140–47, at 144.

Hugo attributed the damage that had been inflicted on Notre-Dame, which for him constituted a valuable historical record, to masons and architects, *nos iconoclastes d'écoles et d'académies* (our iconoclasts from the schools and academies).<sup>17</sup> Since architectural training at the time emphasized mastery of the classical tradition, Hugo was implicating the neoclassicists in the injuries Notre-Dame had sustained. This sentiment was shared by some government administrators, especially those around Mérimée, and led to the declaration of Viollet-le-Duc and Lassus as winners of the competition for the restoration. When work actually began on the cathedral in the mid-1840s, it became clear that the deteriorated state of the building meant that the original budget (first estimated at two million francs) would be inadequate to complete the project. As work dragged on into the Second Empire in the early 1850s, both secular advocates and religious supporters of Notre-Dame's restoration argued for additional funding for the project because of the significance of the cathedral which, they all insisted, went beyond its importance to the Catholic church.

For instance, in 1852 the Archbishop of Paris wrote to Emperor Napoleon III (r. 1852–70) to drum up support for the project on the basis of the religious feelings the building stirred in the Catholic faithful, but also the “national sentiment” it provoked in the people of his diocese: “The metropolitan Cathedral is, effectively, before the Palace of Justice, before the City Hall, before the Louvre, the first building of the nation.” Completing the restoration, the archbishop argued, would be tantamount to bringing “national glory” to the state.<sup>18</sup> This striking claim shows that the move to reconceive Notre-Dame as the embodiment of the secular state had succeeded to the degree that even the church spoke of the building in those terms. As the comments of the archbishop demonstrate, the concept of the “nation” and of its inherence in Gothic architecture was sufficiently broad that it could appeal to vastly different political regimes; restoring Notre-Dame began as a prestige project for the July Monarchy, but that did not preclude its being sold to the Second Empire as an effort that would bring credit to Napoleon III. The very scale and architectural audaciousness of Notre-Dame confirmed the high aspirations articulated for the French nation by its political philosophers from the eighteenth century onward, as described by historian Liah Greenfeld: “It was not just a nation, it was the Great Nation, *la Grande Nation*, the most national of nations, which carried to perfection the virtues required by the new cult.”<sup>19</sup>

In order to meet the challenge of representing the unified French nation, Notre-Dame had to be presented as itself being unified. Hence the scars of those periods in which it had been neglected or deliberately damaged had to be removed. The restoration proposal of Viollet-le-Duc and Lassus aimed to stabilize deteriorated fabric, but also returned to its original configuration the central portal of the facade (previously altered by

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<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Nichols, “Le livre,” 147.

<sup>18</sup> Archbishop M.D. Auguste to Napoleon III, 11 December 1852, AN, F/19/7805.

<sup>19</sup> Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 154–88, at 188.



Soufflot) and replaced the lost figures from the Gallery of Kings; the blank appearance of the latter had been considered “shocking” by the government agency that reviewed the proposal.<sup>20</sup> The voids left by the removal of the figures were undoubtedly objectionable, but the empty niches also recalled the moment at which the cathedral had been the object of deliberate destruction. Thus the two proposed repairs (to the central portal and the Gallery of Kings) removed traces of the Ancien Régime and the Revolution, respectively, from the cathedral’s facade. But the architects sought to bring about an even more dramatic transformation; they attempted “to give back to our beautiful cathedral *all its splendor*, to restore to it *all the riches of which it has been robbed*.”<sup>21</sup> Even if the perpetrators of this robbery were not named, it can be inferred that both the Revolutionary vandals and the neoclassical architects reviled by Hugo were to blame.

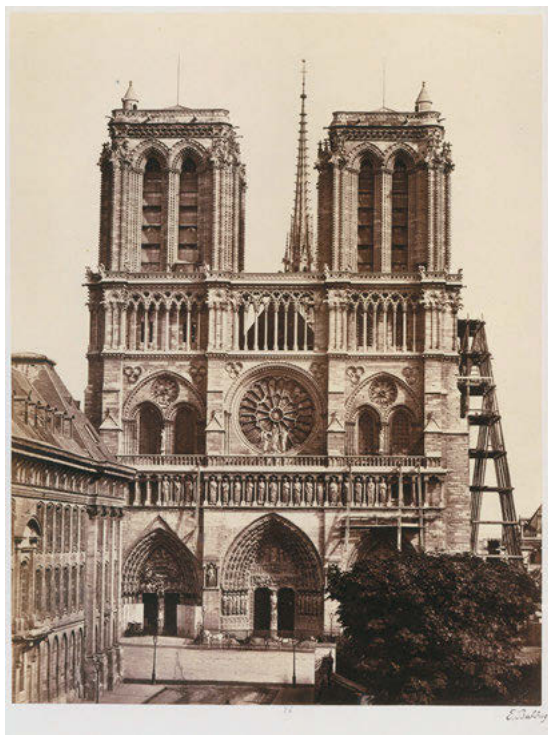
When the work was largely completed, in 1862 (Fig. 7.3), the progressive art critic Jules Castagnary lamented the loss of these traces of the Revolution, not just from Notre-Dame but from other restored buildings as well: “Vainly will history have passed over [the monuments]. . . . Vainly will the Revolution, coming into their sanctuaries like the Angel of Death, have extinguished their candles with its wings and melted their reliquaries with its blazing sword . . . . It would seem that this most recent past must give way to a more ancient past.”<sup>22</sup> That remote period was the Middle Ages, imagined as the birthplace of a unified French nation. Castagnary’s position is complex. He would have liked the impact of the Revolution to be visible in religious buildings, but, at the same time, his view of their desacralization was not entirely triumphant since he represented the secularizing force in the guise of the Angel of Death; however much Castagnary championed the memory of the Revolution, he still mourned the loss of the trappings of religion.

In the context of a nation that had been riven by fundamental political conflicts over the previous half century or more, the restoration of Notre-Dame in the 1840s could only gain support when its champions argued that it would result in an image of national cohesion, not the turmoil that in fact characterized the period. In a similar sense, the restoration of Notre-Dame following the 2019 fire was described by Macron as the project of a unified nation, even though the political situation in France at the time was inflammatory. France was then one of “many countries across the Euro-Atlantic region [that] have seen an alarming shift to the right in the past few years, not least fueled by anti-migrant sentiments,” espoused by “populist and right-wing extremist parties like the National Rally in France.” Approximately 85 percent of Euro-

<sup>20</sup> Report of the Conseil Général des Bâtiments Civils, 1 June 1843, AN, F/19/7803.

<sup>21</sup> Restoration proposal of Viollet-le-Duc and Lassus quoted in César Daly, “Restauration projetée de Notre-Dame de Paris,” *Revue générale de l’architecture et des travaux publics* 4 (1843): 137–41, at 140; emphasis in original.

<sup>22</sup> Jules Castagnary, “Notre-Dame restaurée,” in *Les livres propos* (Paris: Librairie Internationale, 1864), 140.



**Fig. 7.3:** Edouard Baldus, *Notre-Dame (facade)*, ca. 1860s; Albumen silver print from glass negative. Photo: New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, David Hunter McAlpin Fund, 44.55.7 (open access/public domain).

peans surveyed in 2019 believed that populism was then a serious threat to the region's peace and security.<sup>23</sup>

Architectural historian Richard Wittman has convincingly read Macron's advocacy for the rapid restoration of Notre-Dame as a metaphor for his neoliberal politics. Wittman wrote that, in the wake of the fire, it was hard not to see the conflagration as symbolic of the "deep unease" in France, provoked by "the emergence of confrontational political movements that seek not reform but revolution (*Nuit debout*, Extinction Rebellion, and especially the *Gilets jaunes*) as well as the unexpected electoral successes of Marine Le Pen's right-wing and xenophobic *Rassemblement national* (the erstwhile National Front)." To this litany of potentially destabilizing groups that threatened to upturn French life must be added Macron's own neoliberal policies, for instance, the dismantling of labor regulations and social safety nets on which the

<sup>23</sup> European Leadership Network, *YGLN [Younger Generation Leaders Network] Annual Trend Survey 2019* (London: European Leadership Network, 2019), 11–12.

French have relied for decades.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, according to one account, discussion of Notre-Dame literally replaced that of the issues raised by the *Gilets jaunes*: “[On 15 April 2019] President Emmanuel Macron was at the Elysee [sic] Palace, where he had just recorded a televised national address for that evening responding to the ‘yellow vests.’ . . . He canceled the speech and rushed to the cathedral. Notre Dame [he said] is ‘our history, our literature, our imagination . . . the epicenter of our life. . . . This cathedral, we will rebuild it, all of us together.’”<sup>25</sup> To succeed in winning support, the project had to be connected with a very general notion of French cultural achievement and a sense of national identity that superseded particular religious or ethnic associations.

That meaning of Notre-Dame also had to be compelling for an international, even global, constituency of potential funders. While France’s elite pledged hundreds of millions of dollars to the cathedral’s restoration fund, national and multinational corporations immediately stepped up with donations that, by the fall of 2019, had amounted to nearly a billion dollars.<sup>26</sup> As in the 1840s, in 2019 the restoration of Notre-Dame was supported by legislative action by the French government, in this case a bill of 29 July which provided for a “national fundraising effort” on behalf of the project and a “complex system of tax breaks” to benefit the French contributors.<sup>27</sup> The international funding of the project distinguished it from the nineteenth-century restoration which was financed by the French themselves, at least in part in a spirit of cultural nationalism and competitiveness. Mérimée was just one of the leaders of the French preservation movement who believed that the nation had fallen far behind other European countries and Great Britain in taking care of its historic monuments. A travel writer himself, Mérimée was aware of the role that restored monuments played in attracting increasing numbers of international visitors.

The foreign observers of the nineteenth-century French restoration efforts were, in their turn, critical of the nation’s restoration campaign. For instance, a contributor to the British journal *The Ecclesiologist* wrote about Notre-Dame in 1846 that while the French government had ordered “just now . . . this or that work to be well done,” there was no certainty that in the future a new regime might not lead to one being “ill done.” Skeptical of the centralized approach to restoration in France, the author did express faith in “the generous liberty of local action” in England.<sup>28</sup> British authors also noted the distinction between the French approach to restoration, epitomized by Viollet-le-Duc’s claim that it entailed returning a building to an imagined state of com-

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<sup>24</sup> Wittman, “Churches and States (Updated),” 19.

<sup>25</sup> See Robert Kunzig, “Notre Dame After the Fire,” *National Geographic* 241, no. 2 (Feb. 2022): 36–71, at 49.

<sup>26</sup> Stefanie Waldek, “Where Paris’s Notre-Dame Cathedral Stands One Year After the Fire,” *AD [Architectural Digest]*, 15 April 2020, <https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/where-paris-notre-dame-cathedral-stands-one-year-after-fire>.

<sup>27</sup> Dominique Poulot, “The Flames of Notre-Dame and the Ravaged Landscape of French Heritage Management,” *Museum Worlds: Advances in Research* 7 (2019): 202–17, at 206.

<sup>28</sup> “Notre Dame de Paris, the *Annales Archéologiques*, and Church Restoration in France,” *The Ecclesiologist*, n. s., 5 (1846): 66.

pletion, which may never have been actually realized in the past, and the British attitude to historic buildings, which was to preserve them along with the signs of age and wear that the French were keen to expunge.<sup>29</sup>

Just a few years before the anonymous contributor opined in *The Ecclesiologist* about the nationalization of restoration in France, a writer in the *Illustrated London News* in May 1843 called the completion of Cologne Cathedral, the “pre-eminent” architectural project under way in Europe at that time. Although, as Astrid Swenson has demonstrated, finishing the incomplete medieval cathedral was an international project that drew the support of the British, French, and others under the rubric of a “common [Gothic architectural] heritage,” it was not completed until 1880, by which time the major restoration of Notre-Dame was long since finished. By their natures, the two projects were very different, yet as Swenson points out, the hoped-for completion of Cologne Cathedral was often invoked by Viollet-le-Duc, Mérimée, and other leaders of the preservation movement in France as a justification for nationally significant projects like the restoration of Notre-Dame.<sup>30</sup>

In 2019, the funding of Notre-Dame was undertaken on a far broader level than it had been in the nineteenth century because, although the building was still considered a French achievement, it was also construed as part of a global patrimony. The outpouring of financial support for Notre-Dame from around the world was not without its critics; for example, a member of the *Gilets jaunes* who protested the day after the fire with a sign reading “We are not Notre-Dame” pointed to the seeming paradox of investing untold millions of euros in the restoration project while failing to attend to the needs of the French people. The philosopher Paul B. Preciado pointedly wrote that “The archbishop of Paris proclaimed that everyone’s house was burning,” when Notre-Dame was in flames. “We hadn’t known until then that Notre-Dame was everyone’s house, since every night there are thousands of homeless people sleeping on the streets and refugees are constantly expelled from the city.”<sup>31</sup> The claim made by the clergy itself for the universal significance of the cathedral was thus connected to the critique of the restoration project based on the simultaneous lack of attention to the social needs of the diverse population of France.

The aspect of the project that excited the most heated debate, and that inspired the most exotic proposals, was the repair of the roof and reconstruction of the spire.

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<sup>29</sup> See Stephan Tscudi Madsen, *Restoration and Anti-Restoration: A Study in English Restoration Philosophy* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1976). Viollet-le-Duc wrote in his *Dictionary of Architecture* that: “To restore a building is not to preserve it, to repair, or to rebuild it; it is to reinstate it in a condition of completeness which may never have existed at any given time.” Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, “Restauration,” in *Dictionnaire raisonné de l’architecture* (Paris: Morel, 1866), 8:14–34, at 14; cited from *The Architectural Theory of Viollet-le-Duc: Readings and Commentary*, ed. M. F. Hearn (Cambridge: MIT University Press, 1990), 269.

<sup>30</sup> Astrid Swenson, “Cologne Cathedral as an International Monument,” in *Rewriting German History: New Perspectives on Modern Germany*, ed. Jan Rüger and Nikolaus Wachsmann (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 29–51, at 31.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Valeria Costa-Kostritsky, “Trial by Fire,” *Apollo* 191, no. 686 (May 2020): 22–26, at 24.

At its core, the discussion was about a philosophy of preservation, although it was not exactly framed in those terms. In early 2020, an international groundswell of support for the idea of reconstructing the spire in a frankly contemporary manner, based in some cases on what Wittman has pointed out was a flawed understanding of Viollet-le-Duc's approach, resulted in an array of proposals for such flagrantly modernist gestures as a glass roof and spire, a shaft of light projected upward in place of the burned structure, and "a 'permanent flame' made of carbon fiber coated with gold leaf" (Fig. 7.4). In the end, President Macron resolved to rebuild the roof structure and spire of Notre-Dame as they existed before the fire.<sup>32</sup> This approach was more consistent with preservation practice throughout the West, as well as with the objective of making the project a unifying one; a dramatic contemporary gesture would have had the drawback, among many others, of being potentially divisive.

The concept of a restored monument that supported the objective of political unity was controversial in the nineteenth century, as it is today. In both instances, the physical transformations of the building were seen as antithetical to its religious meaning. On the brink of Notre-Dame's restoration, in 1837, the Catholic commentator Jean-Philippe Schmit argued that once it had been made new again, Parisians would treat the cathedral as they would a museum or any other secular urban form of entertainment.<sup>33</sup> In a similar vein, American architectural historian and critic Michael Lewis exclaimed that through a new treatment of the interior of Notre-Dame, paradoxically proposed by the clergy itself, the space was "to be transformed into something akin to a contemporary art installation or theme park" with the addition of Renaissance paintings and projected images educating the 12 million annual visitors, many of them non-Christians, in the faith. Developed by Father Gilles Drouin, an advisor to the archbishop of Paris, the project was approved by the French National Heritage and Architecture Commission, albeit with some slight modifications likely made in response to the uproar against the original plan.<sup>34</sup>

The rush to rid Notre-Dame of the traces of the fire as quickly as possible, while the monuments and material remains of diverse populations around the world continued to suffer from deliberate destruction and environmental degradation, was at the core of the critique of the project made by medievalists Clare Monagle and Amanda Power. Given the loss of knowledge of the building techniques used in the original structure, they argued that "Notre Dame cannot be restored to herself. Even with meticulous reconstruction, she will be something else. She will be a kitsch monument to modernity's inability to sit with scars, and to reckon with loss."<sup>35</sup> This critique

<sup>32</sup> Wittman, "Churches and States (Updated)," 28.

<sup>33</sup> Jean-Philippe Schmit, *Les églises gothiques* (Paris: J. Angé, 1837), 158–64.

<sup>34</sup> Michael Lewis, "An Incendiary Plan for Notre-Dame Cathedral," *Wall Street Journal*, 1 December 2021; Constant Méheut, "Modernization of Notre-Dame Interior Gets Green Light," *New York Times*, 10 December 2021.

<sup>35</sup> Clare Monagle and Amanda Power, "Notre-Dame is Burning: Medieval Futures," *Parergon* 36, no. 2 (July 2019): 169–72, at 171.



**Fig. 7.4:** Mathieu Lehanneur, Project for Notre-Dame, 2020. Photo: Mathieu Lehanneur.

directly parallels the one leveled by Castagnary against the nineteenth-century restoration of Notre-Dame where he argued that, by effacing the marks of the Revolution from the fabric of the building, the restorers risked rendering meaningless that crucial moment in the social, political, cultural, and religious redefinition of France.

Monagle and Power argued that there is a striking, yet generally unrecognized, disparity between the passion for Notre-Dame, which they attribute to white supremacy, and the ways that the monuments of indigenous, Muslim, and presumably other people whose material culture is a low priority for Europeans are ignored.<sup>36</sup> A few journalists noted that on the very day of the Notre-Dame fire, another one occurred at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque, considered one of "the world's most prominent holy sites." Admittedly, the Jerusalem fire was less destructive than the one in Paris, but the fact that it was "largely overshadowed" by what happened at Notre-Dame has been taken by some to indicate a relative lack of concern for non-Christian monuments.<sup>37</sup> Throughout the West, including in France, xenophobia and racism are on the rise. Both underwrite the vaunting of Christian monuments, often to the exclusion of the material remains of other religions. Thus, a 2015 report to the European Parliament "stresse[d] the importance of developing a true democratic and participative narrative for European heritage, including that of religious and ethnic minorities" and "[drew] attention to the presence of heritage sites which embed different or contested pasts."<sup>38</sup> In 2019, the medieval art historian Anna Russakoff, who identifies as a Jewish American, reported that "The fire at Notre Dame has made me reflect on the religious minorities of France, and how our monuments fail to define the city," meaning that they do not represent its religious and cultural diversity. She equated the failure to officially acknowledge the minaret of the Great Mosque of Paris, constructed in the early twentieth century, as a defining element of the city's skyline, with French anti-Muslim bias.<sup>39</sup> In the context of increasing attention being paid to inclusivity and diversity in the field of historic preservation, and at a politically volatile moment, President Macron used the reconstruction of Notre-Dame as a potentially unifying national project, building on the discourse that had surrounded the cathedral since its restoration in the nineteenth century. Doing so, he sidestepped the obvious religious meanings of the cathedral, as had his nineteenth-century predecessors, and instead emphasized its standing as (to paraphrase the Archbishop of Paris speaking more than 150 years earlier) the first building of the nation.

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36 Monagle and Power, "Notre-Dame," 169–72.

37 Meilan Solly, "A Small Fire Broke Out at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque as Flames Ravaged Notre-Dame," *Smithsonian Magazine*, 17 April 2019, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/small-fire-broke-out-jerusalems-al-aqsa-mosque-flames-ravaged-notre-dame-180971983/>.

38 European Parliament, Committee on Culture and Education, *Report Towards an Integrated Approach to Cultural Heritage for Europe*, 24 June 2015, 12.

39 Anna Russakoff, "Some Reflections from Ground Zero," *Postmedieval* 10 (2019): 513–15, at 514.





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### **III The Politics of Display and Dissemination**



Chiara Cecalupo

# Papal Political Uses of the Art of the Catacombs (Sixteenth through Nineteenth Centuries)

The rediscovery of Roman catacombs from the mid-sixteenth century onward spread knowledge about early Christian and early medieval art throughout Europe. The catacombs became a popular subject and the progress of the subterranean discoveries promoted in-depth studies, vast numbers of visual representations (engravings, watercolors, paintings), and museum displays. The popes played a pivotal role in the process of disseminating Roman Christian art. During the Counter-Reformation period, the study of both catacombs and medieval churches proved useful in maintaining the papacy's international prestige and, from an anti-Protestant perspective, in demonstrating the apostolic origins of the Roman church. Similarly, epigraphs, paintings, and, especially, relics taken from Roman cemeteries were sent all over the world. This allowed the Catholic church during the seventeenth century to disseminate catacomb discoveries by selling actual archaeological and artistic materials as well as reproductions in various formats. Even more decisively, during the nineteenth century, the popes promoted extensive excavations to support research into Christian antiquities; I argue that this was done in response to a crisis in their international secular power that culminated in 1870 with the end of the Papal States. The popes, who used early Christian art to reconnect ideologically with the period of Christian persecution, not only held the exclusive right to reproduce Christian works of art for sale, study, and dissemination, but they also promoted new ways of using these reproductions, particularly in the fields of museology (e.g., the creation and exposition of facsimiles of catacombs throughout Europe for educational purposes) and architecture (e.g., room decorations inspired by catacomb art). Accordingly, the focus of this essay is not so much on the catacombs themselves, but on the image of the catacombs as controlled and propagated by the papal authorities.

I emphasize two salient moments in the history of the political uses of the art of the catacombs from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century: the Counter-Reformation and the end of the Papal States. My case studies will be analyzed through archival materials and other primary sources on the catacombs and ecclesiastical history, copies of the paintings, and museum architecture. My aim is to highlight how catacomb art, manipulated to serve papal political agendas, offers an important example of the post-medieval instrumentalization of the early Christian and medieval artistic heritage.

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## Catacombs for a Counter-Reformation Agenda

Knowledge of the catacombs and the artistic treasures they contained was never totally ignored or forgotten (contrary to long-standing assertions made by questionable but influential twentieth-century historiography).<sup>1</sup> Records of pilgrims visiting the catacombs as part of the Christian cult circuit in Rome are numerous throughout the Middle Ages and early modernity.<sup>2</sup> Renaissance humanist scholars, often relying on firsthand knowledge acquired during visits to the sites themselves, were the first to present the art of catacombs in print. The construction of New St. Peter's throughout the sixteenth century required extensive and lengthy excavations; these had an important scholarly impact, as they brought a significant number of sarcophagi, epigraphs, and artifacts to light. For the modern clerical and scholarly world of Rome, these objects represented the first major contact with the grandeur of early Christian art.

The accidental discovery of a Christian catacomb within the Sanchez vineyard on the Via Salaria Nova on 31 May 1578 (during the pontificate of Gregory XIII) yielded an impressive set of wall paintings. The excavation of these catacomb galleries (now known as the Anonymous Catacomb of Via Anapo) can be considered to mark the moment when Christian archaeology—understood as the active research of archaeological sites and objects related to the first six centuries of Christianity—began. However questionable that narrative, the discovery nonetheless represented a change because it took place in a peripheral area of the city and so involved sections of the sixteenth-century population of Rome and its countryside that had previously been excluded from the rediscovery of and appreciation for Christian antiquities. These totally unknown and extraordinary underground tunnels, marvelously decorated with paintings, attracted such huge crowds that Gregory XIII decided to fence off the area in the summer of 1578 (the fence was then torn down by eager groups of visitors). Visitors included not only clerics, scholars, and antiquarians but also, and perhaps most importantly, ordinary people. This new, widespread attention to early Christian art is interesting and important. It became a topic that was no longer reserved for erudite discussion, but appeared to have a great appeal for common people who managed to visit the underground chambers and monuments around Rome. This meant that early Christian art now could be used to convey Catholic messages to everyone.

The discovery of the Via Anapo catacomb also stimulated the search for more underground cemeteries throughout the Roman countryside; archaeological forays were

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1 For a complete bibliography on the history of Christian archaeology discussed here, see Giuseppe Ferretto, *Note storico-bibliografiche di archeologia cristiana* (Vatican City: Tipografia Vaticana, 1942); Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann, *Einführung in die christliche Archäologie* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983); Chiara Cecalupo, Antonio Bosio, *la Roma sotterranea e i primi collezionisti di archeologia cristiana* (Vatican City: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 2020).

2 Erik Inglis, "Inventing Apostolic Impression Relics in Medieval Rome," *Speculum* 96 (2021): 309–66.

led by scholars, different religious groups, and even ordinary citizens. That feverish research culminated in 1634 with the publication of the first monograph on the Roman catacombs, Antonio Bosio's *Roma sotterranea* (Underground Rome). This work and the explorations of catacombs led by Bosio were instrumental in increasing international interest in the catacombs. While Christian cemeteries in several Mediterranean areas had already attracted the attention of scholars during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the new discoveries caused scholars and artists from all over Europe to flock to Rome to draw and describe the paintings found in the galleries of the catacombs.

Recent studies have shown that, in the early years of the Counter-Reformation, the relationship between the first investigations of the catacombs and Catholic agendas was tenuous at best.<sup>3</sup> Yet in a cultural context largely dominated by the programmatic needs defined at the Council of Trent (1563)—to develop a unique artistic discourse controlled and directed by the church—there were surely links between a genuine interest in Christian antiquities and the Catholic Counter-Reformation, between sacred art and apologetics. In fact, Catholic scholars of the second half of the sixteenth century, both Roman and European, were very keen to render service to the Catholic Church by showing that the paintings of the catacombs could corroborate knowledge derived from literary and historical sources and that both pictures and texts could be harnessed to legitimize a Catholic position against the Protestant schism. The most immediate interest was to record the paintings that were being gradually discovered in various Roman cemeteries. This was due not only to the intrinsic wonder and awe aroused by the sight of such unknown, mysterious, and yet so well-preserved Christian paintings; the discoveries also gave their viewers a sense of being linked to scriptural episodes narrated in the early times of what was then a new religion, but which were known to every Catholic *and* Protestant. In short, ancient paintings were being unearthed that conveyed familiar religious stories and concepts, all in an easily understood visual language: stories from the Old and New Testaments painted in a simple style, clear images of Jesus and Mary, and common symbols like crosses, fishes, and anchors.

This immediacy and, above all, the memory of a heroic era of the Church, of which the stories of saints and martyrs represented the main legacy, produced a particular interest in the catacombs. Revived early Christian themes and symbols—such as the story of Jonah or the palm as a sign of martyrdom—were used in all the arts to fulfill

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3 Ingo Herklotz, "Christliche und klassische Archäologie im sechzehnten Jahrhundert: Skizzen zur Genese einer Wissenschaft," in *Die Gegenwart des Altertums. Formen und Funktionen des Altertumsbezugs in den Hochkulturen der Alten Welt*, ed. Dieter Kuhn and Helga Stahl (Heidelberg: Edition Forum, 2001), 291–307; Alessandra Di Croce, "Christian Antiquity and its Material Legacy in Post-Tridentine Rome," in *Re-thinking, Re-making, Re-living Christian Origins*, ed. Ivan Foletti et al. (Roma: Viella, 2018), 35–56; Martine Gosselin, "The Congregation of the Oratorians and the Origins of Christian Archaeology: A Reappraisal," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 104 (2009): 471–93.

the Tridentine mandate. This revival created a new visual resource for the faithful, a set of iconographies that provided new devotional tools to foster popular piety. For example, there was widespread diffusion of paintings with early Christian saints (Cecilia above all) in churches and private houses in the early seventeenth century. Not even the grand Baroque architecture of triumphant Rome, financed by various popes, escaped this thematic imperative, since it often sought to make ancient Christianity present through the monumental recreation of early Christian liturgical spaces. One thinks, for example, of Cardinal Cesare Baronio's 1599 commission to rebuild the presbytery of the Church of SS. Nereus and Achilleus as a reduced copy of the same space in the Constantinian Basilica of St. Paul's Outside the Walls.

The discovery, study, and recreation of the early Christian art found in the catacombs had a broad cultural role that was expressed in two main political directions. First, early Christian pictorial art was presented as incorrupt, pure, severe, and spiritual. This made it the perfect vehicle for a process of artistic and figurative renewal for Catholicism that was intended to counter Protestant criticism.<sup>4</sup> Second, the discovery of early Christian art and its clear message served to promote the idea that the Roman Church reached from apostolic times to the present in an unbroken continuum. The catacomb images were very old; but in a certain sense, they were also new because they were reinterpreted as living images, as models to be imitated, and as a source of artistic inspiration.

## Scholars in the Service of the Church

Among the scholars who came from all over Europe with their draftsmen to make copies of the Christian antiquities they discovered was the Andalusian Dominican Alonso Chacón (ca. 1542–99). After having been one of the leading scholars in the Seville region during the early years of the Counter-Reformation, he moved to Rome and worked all his life in the service of the popes and his own order.<sup>5</sup> Chacón produced watercolor copies of the paintings of the Via Anapo site, some of which have now disappeared.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, one of the objectives that drove Chacón's enterprise was to record as much as possible of the visual legacy of the early church that was being uncovered under his eyes and was threatened

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4 Steven Ostrow, ed., *L'arte dei papi: La politica delle immagini nella Roma della Controriforma* (Rome: Carocci, 2002); Marcia B. Hall and Tracy E. Cooper, eds., *The Sensuous in the Counter-Reformation Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

5 Stefan Heid, "Alonso Chacón," in *Personenlexikon zur Christlichen Archäologie*, ed. Stefan Heid and Martin Dennert (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2012), 301–3.

6 Johannes Georg Deckers, Gabriele Mietke, and Albrecht Weiland eds., *Die Katakomben "Anonima di via Anapo": Repertorium der Malereien* (Vatican City: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1991).

by urban interventions.<sup>7</sup> In the introduction to his first publication, the *Historia seu verissima a calumniis multorum vindicata* (The truest history against the falsehoods of many), which was dedicated to Pope Gregory XIII, Chacón himself recalled the abandonment, outright destructions, and general irreversible deterioration of the early Christian churches in Rome. Fears about the material, moral, and historical loss of buildings represented a serious problem for a scholar like Chacón because it meant losing fundamental information for a historiography in the service of the Counter-Reformation (such as the original position of early Christian altars, which were typically the first elements to be moved on the grounds of restoration and preservation). This conservative bent is apparent in his report on the discovery of the Via Anapo catacomb in 1578.<sup>8</sup> While reaffirming interest in the works of art as historical vestiges, Chacón emphasized their importance as evidence of the ancient apostolic church, to be preserved as “arrows and weapons” against the ungodly (read, the Protestants).

New evidence of Chacón’s strong beliefs about the role of catacomb art in the service of Counter-Reformation politics has recently come to light.<sup>9</sup> In a long letter he wrote in July of 1578 to describe the rediscovery of the catacomb to his friend Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti, Chacón stated that “if, from the streets of this cemetery, one were to excavate the endless marble slabs, one would find many inscriptions of great importance, confirming the religion of that place, the Catholic dogmas, and ecclesiastical history.”<sup>10</sup> Chacón thus openly saw catacomb finds as proofs of Catholic beliefs. Another report written in 1578 also explicitly connected the rediscovery of the catacomb frescoes to the defense of Catholicism and its causes.<sup>11</sup> The anonymous author expanded on the meaning of the newly found site by presenting it as a place to be honored for its antiquity and holiness. In his view, visitors to the catacomb were moved to tears by the memory of persecution and suffering; it was a place of piety that continues to bear witness to the living saints of the early Church. And this made it useful “for the confirmation of our indubitable and most certain Catholic religion and of Catholic rites” and for promoting “the veneration, care, and diligence regarding the burial of bodies.” The same writer went on to underline how one can clearly see that “in the time of the pagans and idolaters those pious and holy friends of God were painted and worshipped in pious images in the bowels of the earth, even though they could not show themselves publicly in the light of this world.”<sup>12</sup> It bears emphasizing

<sup>7</sup> His intention was to publish them in his masterwork (never completed), the *Historica descriptio urbis Romae*.

<sup>8</sup> Los Angeles, Getty Center for the History of Art and Humanities, Archives of the History of Art, Ms. 88–A200 840005B, fols. 70r–78v.

<sup>9</sup> Ingo Herklotz, *Alonso Chacón e i primi studi sulla Roma sotterranea* (Rome: Arbor Sapientiae, 2022).

<sup>10</sup> Herklotz, *Alonso Chacón*, 65–66.

<sup>11</sup> Heinrich Volbert Sauerland, “Bericht über die erste Entdeckung der Katakomben im Sommer 1578,” *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte* 2 (1888): 209–11; Ferretto, *Note storico-bibliografiche*, 107–9.

<sup>12</sup> Sauerland, “Bericht,” 211.

that this text was not an official account and was probably written for a non-Roman public. This makes it a very important testimony, since it expresses common sentiments toward the catacombs and their role in the society of the time.

Antonio Bosio's *Roma sotterranea*, published during the pontificate of Urban VIII (1623–44), took a similar direction. Bosio was a learned man who was deeply interested in early Christian art. His book was left unfinished upon his death in 1629, only to be completed and published in 1634 by the Oratorian father Giovanni Severano. The Oratorians were an order founded by St. Philip Neri (1515–95) that was very active in the field of Christian antiquities.<sup>13</sup> While Bosio's original draft referred extensively to the importance of the catacombs in the fight against the "Protestant heresy," Severano was even more explicit. In the introductory letter to the reader, he recalled that Bosio had discovered (and, therefore, revealed to the world) the great and precious treasures of the "sacred cemeteries." This material legacy of the nascent church, places where Christian martyrs had acquired eternal glory, was now an "arsenal" where contemporary men can take up arms to fight against the "heretics."<sup>14</sup>

*Roma sotterranea* remains a landmark publication in the history of the renewal and conservation of the early Christian architectural heritage. Cardinal Francesco Barberini (1623–1669), a major advocate of the use of antiquities for the development of Baroque art, vigorously encouraged its publication, ensuring that it contributed greatly to the diffusion of early Christian iconography in Counter-Reformation culture. The fourth section, added by Severano, offered interpretations of the most common Christian scenes found in catacomb frescoes. It also asserted that catacombs were used only by true Roman Christians; no heretic was ever buried there or even had the possibility of entering those underground spaces. For Bosio and Severano, no place provided a purer expression of the Christian religion than the catacombs. They viewed early Christian imagery as a tool as useful as Scripture and other books in "lighting the mind, warming the heart, strengthening the will" of true Christians everywhere.<sup>15</sup>

Between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Oratorians produced not only works concerned primarily with early Christian art, but also historical publications focused on the foundation of the Church and the first centuries of Roman Christianity, with special attention given to the stories of the community's first martyrs and priests. Their main publishing enterprise was that of Cardinal Cesare Baronio (1538–1607), whose story will be recalled here for some of its political implications. The work of Baronio, a member of the Oratorian order, would remain an indispensable source for martyrological and hagiographic studies for many years to come. His twelve-volume *Annales ecclesiastici a Cristo nato ad annum 1198* (Annals of the

<sup>13</sup> Chiara Cecalupo, "Giovanni Severano da Sanseverino prete dell'Oratorio e le catacombe romane," *Rivista di archeologia cristiana* 95 (2019): 207–29.

<sup>14</sup> Antonio Bosio, *La Roma sotterranea* (Rome: Guglielmo Facciotti, 1634), 5\*.

<sup>15</sup> Bosio, *Roma sotterranea*, 594, 602.



Church from the birth of Christ to 1198), first published in 1588, presented a year-by-year account of the history of Christianity, with synoptic tables that put events of ecclesiastical and political history side-by-side. This ambitious publication reflected a Catholic view of ecclesiastical history; importantly, it included a discussion of Roman catacombs (such as the Catacomb of San Callisto containing tombs of third-century popes) which Baronio knew very well, having visited them several times in person.

In order to fully understand the importance of Baronio's role in the dissemination of Christian antiquity in the post-Tridentine era, it is crucial to underline that his works were both commissioned and financed by prominent figures of the Curia, who helped him choose which saints and martyrs would be celebrated in his books.<sup>16</sup> They were among several publishing initiatives undertaken in the aftermath of the Council of Trent that codified the history, doctrine, and image of the Roman Catholic Church, largely in polemical response to the Protestants. Baronio's writings, like Bosio's, operated in close connection with the ecclesiastical hierarchies. Their letters of dedication to the pope or to representatives of the upper echelons of the Roman Curia contain a programmatic manifesto composed in the apologetic and propagandistic spirit of the cultural policies of the Counter-Reformation. These publications became a megaphone for the papacy's ideas about Christian archaeology.

If, in the seventeenth century, publications about catacombs continued to multiply, it was the eighteenth century that witnessed the emergence of private and institutional collections devoted to Christian antiquities. The Vatican Sacred Museum opened in 1756–57, as did a department in the Vatican Offices dedicated to the custody and care of the catacombs. The early Christian artistic and religious heritage was now officially in the hands of the Church. In fact, the Custodian of Relics, a title created in 1672 but not fully developed until the mid-eighteenth century, was pivotal in carrying out the systematic investigation of all Christian cemeteries of Rome. This office registered the works of art contained in the catacombs and was also in charge of the diffusion of any relics found there.

## Christian Archaeology during the Pontificate of Pius IX (1846–78)

The next great change in the history of Christian archaeology occurred in the 1850s. Under the pontificate of Pius IX in particular, the promotion of the excavation and study of Roman catacombs became extensive and more explicitly politicized.<sup>17</sup> Popu-

<sup>16</sup> Filip Malesevich, *Kardinal Cesare Baronio und das Kurienzerimoniell des Posttridentinischen Papsttum* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 109–42.

<sup>17</sup> Giovanna Capitelli, *Mecenatismo pontificio e borbonico alla vigilia dell'Unità* (Rome: Viviani Editore, 2011), 71–76.

lar riots led to the institution of the Roman Republic in 1848 and forced the Pope into exile; he returned to Rome only in 1849. These were the initial acts of a pontificate characterized by persistent ideological and military conflicts with the emerging Kingdom of Italy. These culminated in the dissolution of the Papal States in 1870, which put an end to the popes' temporal power. Given such external pressures, unique in the history of the papacy, Pius IX endeavored to shore up the papacy's power and promote Catholic Christianity with self-assertive policies at both the local and international levels. Until the end of his pontificate, Pius insisted on the self-exaltation of Christian culture and the centrality of Rome by referring to ancient apostolic roots. Christian antiquity therefore assumed a key role in his cultural policy, and he backed and financed important initiatives in the development of the discipline of Christian archaeology. At the center of his strategy were the Roman catacombs as a symbol of the times of persecution and a material embodiment of the martyrological narrative in which his pontificate was cloaked.

Already in the first years of his pontificate, events took place that supported Pius IX's political, religious, and cultural objectives. He, for example, made use of the work of the Jesuit Giuseppe Marchi (1795–1860), considered one of the founders of Christian archaeology as a scientific discipline. With his young assistant Giovanni Battista de Rossi (1822–94), Marchi was put in charge of the excavation of countless catacombs and the subsequent dissemination of their discoveries in textual and visual reports. They also played a leading role in Pius IX's major institutional foundations dedicated to Christian archaeology. The Commission of Sacred Archaeology (1852) oversaw the study and protection of the catacombs and other Christian monuments while the Lateran Christian Museum (1854) included a lapidary section which provided a suitable place to display the many works of art unearthed in the catacombs. This collection, nourished by didactic intents, was designed to advance the understanding of Christian antiquities and functioned like an appendix to the visit to the catacombs.<sup>18</sup> Here, then, we are confronted with a real state archaeology: scientifically conducted, but in the overt service of a political and religious agenda. If that was not enough, Pius IX sponsored large construction and restoration campaigns that became more frequent as the political situation became more complicated. One can think of the restoration of such great early Christian basilicas as San Lorenzo, Sta. Maria in Trastevere, or even St. Paul's Outside the Walls. The celebration of the papal soldiers defeated in the battles against the Kingdom of Italy was also part of this program. In the contemporary narrative, those men rose to the rank of martyrs of the faith; they were accordingly honored in a special monument in St. John Lateran, Rome's cathedral.

Another example of the many ways in which Christian antiquities were valorized under Pius IX's pontificate appears in a text that Marchi addressed to the pope titled

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18 Umberto Utro, "Dalle catacombe al museo: Storia e prospettive del Museo Pio Cristiano," *Bollettino monumenti, musei e gallerie pontificie* 25 (2006): 397–415.



**Fig. 8.1:** Vincenzo Marchi, *Pius IX Praying in the Crypt of Santa Cecilia in the Catacomb of San Callisto*, 1863. Rome, Palazzo Lateranense. Photo from Capitelli, *Mecenatismo pontificio*.

“On the state of religious art in Rome and in support of a measure to give them a more Christian direction.”<sup>19</sup> Marchi explained how the preservation and scientific study of Christian monuments would foster valuable cultural and religious reforms and how recovering the heritage of the early centuries could renew contemporary sacred art. An 1863 painting of Pius IX praying in the crypt of Sta. Cecilia in the catacomb of San Callisto (Fig. 8.1) makes visible the connection between the art of the catacombs and the contemporary interests of the Vatican. The pope’s efforts to support European painters interested in studying the remains of early Christian Rome and in recasting typical early Christian stories of martyrs in a contemporary artistic idiom were well known.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, several international events showcased the union between the art of the catacombs and papal politics. In 1867, Pius IX inaugurated the eighteenth centenary of the martyrdom of SS. Peter and Paul, an imposing event attended by a huge crowd, which celebrated Christian Rome and its ancient (and more recent) martyrs. In 1869, he set up the Gallery of the Saints and the Beatified in the Vatican palaces, ensuring that ancient saints and martyrs triumphed in new iconographies.

<sup>19</sup> “Dello stato delle arti religiose in Roma e della convenienza di un provvedimento che loro appressi una direzione più cristiana”; Capitelli, *Mecenatismo pontificio*, 71.

<sup>20</sup> Capitelli, *Mecenatismo pontificio*, 69–80.

That same year also saw the opening of the First Vatican Council (December 1869–July 1870). This last great event of the Papal State included a comprehensive exhibition of Catholic religious art (*Esposizione romana delle opere d'ogni arte eseguite per culto cattolico*) in the Carthusian monastery annexed to Sta. Maria degli Angeli. This church had been erected in the former Baths of Diocletian, which were commonly remembered as the site of spectacular martyrdoms and trials of faith in the third century.<sup>21</sup> The exhibition's main orchestrator was Marchi's assistant de Rossi, another pioneer of the discipline of Christian archaeology. For the papal pavilion at another exhibition, the 1867 Universal Exhibition in Paris, de Rossi devised, at the behest of the pope, a facsimile of a catacomb (Fig. 8.2).



CATACOMBE DI ROMA.

**Fig. 8.2:** Visitors in the facsimile catacomb of the papal pavilion at the Universal Exhibition in Paris, 1867. Photo from *L'Esposizione Universale del 1867 Illustrata* (Milan: Edoardo Sonzogno, 1867).

In replicating a group of underground spaces, complete with paintings, from among the oldest, most famous, and most significant rooms across various catacombs, de Rossi conjured up in the middle of Paris a Christian cemetery from early third-century Rome (that is, before Constantine's Edict of Toleration and the so-called Peace of the Church). The choice to present the catacombs as they had been in the "centuries

<sup>21</sup> "Inaugurazione dell'Esposizione Romana delle opere d'ogni arte per culto cattolico," *La scienza e la fede: Raccolta religiosa scientifica letteraria artistica* 10, no. 9, ser. 3 (1870).

of persecution” could not fail to take on a clear symbolic and political meaning. The church of Pius IX, which was facing the end of its secular power and a decline of its role in Europe, clearly identified itself with the persecuted church of its origins; and this is how it chose to present itself to the rest of Europe.<sup>22</sup> Specifically, the threat of increased secularization, added to emerging national identities, cast Rome, in its role of universal Christian capital, as a martyr to modernity.<sup>23</sup> Everything Pius IX did was intended to exalt the church’s history through the discoveries of sacred archaeology. These were presented as a global heritage, one that was at the center of cultural and social life, but was threatened by revolutions and “modern paganism.”<sup>24</sup>

At the same time, a new period of relic translations began, replicating a phenomenon that had exploded during the seventeenth century. Its propaganda implications concerned not only Italy but also Catholic communities on all continents. Relics of the martyrs united communities under the long-lasting, protective wing of the authority of the pontiff. France serves as an example: throughout the nineteenth century, bone relics of over three hundred alleged martyrs were taken from the Roman catacombs and sent to local churches to resacralize the country after the Revolution and its program of forced secularization. The martyrs were thus appropriated as symbols of contemporary battles that Roman Catholicism had to fight; they were interpreted as anti-Revolutionary figures who could function as mirrors for the modern faithful. Traditional legends about catacomb saints were also translated into the literary sphere, with internationally successful novels such as Nicholas Wiseman’s *Fabiola* (1854) and John Henry Newman’s *Callista* (1855) narrating the travails of early Christian martyrs. Above all, this vogue entailed a redirection of attention from canonical monuments of the pagan Roman Empire to those that had witnessed stories of foundational Christian events. Thus, pilgrimage increased to sites that spoke to a romantic and emotional fascination for places that had acted as dramatic settings for martyrdom stories: the Colosseum, the Mamertine Prison (linked by tradition to St. Peter’s imprisonment), and, above all, the catacombs. Their galleries were presented as labyrinths of death and glory, as sites where visitors could project themselves into the faith of the early centuries and emerge as newly defined Catholics.<sup>25</sup>

The intellectual seeds planted by de Rossi developed in different directions. By the time of his successors, the archaeology practiced in the overt service of the popes increased even more. Christian archaeology, first pontifical, then communal, deviated

22 Chiara Cecalupo, “Giovanni Battista e Michele Stefano de Rossi all’Esposizione Universale de Parigi (1867),” *Rivista di archeologia cristiana* 97 (2021): 319–47.

23 Stefano Cracolici, “Sotto il segno del martirio: Roma e l’eredità artistica della fede,” in *Vinculos artísticos entre Italia y America: Silencio historiográfico*, ed. Fernando Guzmán and Juan Manuel Martínez (Santiago: Museo Histórico Nacional, Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez, 2012), 43–54.

24 Vincent Viaene, “Gladiators of Expiation: The Cult of the Martyrs in the Catholic Revival of the Nineteenth Century,” *Studies in Church History* 40 (2014): 301–16, at 309.

25 Viaene, “Gladiators of Expiation,” 305–6.

more and more from de Rossi's scientific mode.<sup>26</sup> The mixing of archaeology and propaganda completely changed the discipline's course and to this day still influences the perception of the Roman school of archaeology. Martine Gosselin has pointed out in a groundbreaking essay that publications such as those by Orazio Marucchi read almost the entire history of Christian art and archaeology through a pro-Catholic, anti-Protestant lens. Taking the close intermingling of Christian archaeology and political power as the key to framing the entire discipline led Marucchi and other authors to ignore the broader cultural contexts of each period.<sup>27</sup> It was only in the twentieth century, when research in Christian archaeology expanded across the Mediterranean and Northern Europe, that a wider, multidisciplinary knowledge developed, one that finally allowed scholars to leave behind the burden of working in the service of Catholic propaganda.

## Copies of Catacomb Paintings (Sixteenth and Nineteenth Centuries)

Examination of the role of copies in the dissemination of catacomb images and of the relationship of those copies to papal authority highlights the different uses to which catacomb archaeology was put during the Counter-Reformation era and under Pope Pius IX. Prompted by the discovery of the Catacomb of Via Anapo, the first papal briefs for the protection and control of underground cemeteries issued from 1604 onward granted access to them, at first freely, then by permission, to scholars and copyists from all over Europe.<sup>28</sup> The ease with which permission was granted can be explained by the popes' desire to use paintings with Christian themes as a means of evangelization, self-promotion, and self-exaltation of their apostolic roots. Destined for a European-wide circulation, copies of catacomb art were firmly part of the Counter-Reformation agenda.

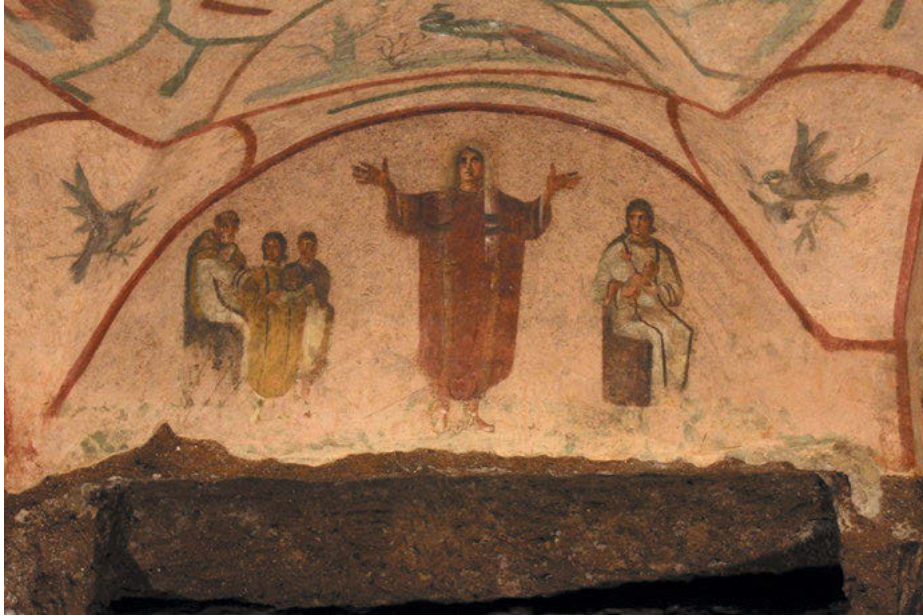
What characterizes the images of catacombs from this period (whether they saw publication or not) is their great diversity. Rarely are they faithful copies; the personal imprint of the artist is always strong. These were truly interpretative copies that distorted not only the style but even the meaning of the copied scene. Two cases can be seen as emblematic of this process of creative appropriation. The first is in one of the manuscripts commissioned by the Spanish scholar and catacomb explorer Chacón; it depicts an almost Mannerist rendition of the central scene of the Cubiculum of the Veiled Woman from the Catacomb of Priscilla. The original, dated to the mid-third

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<sup>26</sup> Chiara Cecalupo, "The Rome Pavilion at the Italian General Exhibition in Turin in 1884: The Exposition of Maps and Plans of Rome by Giovanni Battista de Rossi and the City Museum," *Acme* 75 (2022), 129–46.

<sup>27</sup> Gosselin, "The Congregation of the Oratorians."

<sup>28</sup> Vatican City, Vatican Library, Vat. lat. 5409, fol. 24r.



**Fig. 8.3:** Rome, Catacomb of Priscilla, central scene from the Cubiculum of the Veiled Woman. Photo: © Pontificia Commissione di Archeologia Cristiana, Permission no. 22/00033.

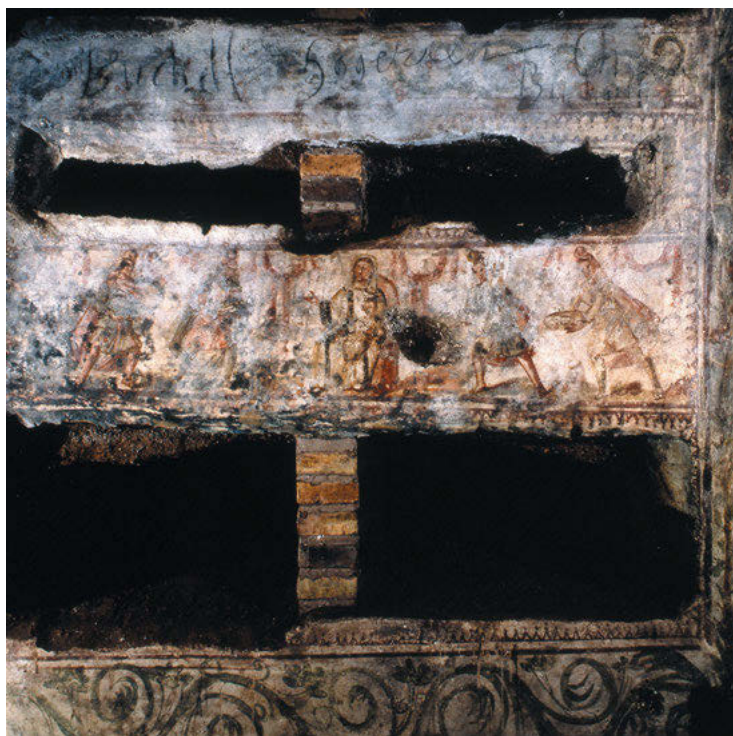


**Fig. 8.4:** Chacòn's interpretation of the scene from the Cubiculum of the Veiled Woman in the Catacomb of Priscilla. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 5409, f. 16r (detail). Photo: © Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Permission no. 16625.



century, places the figure of the deceased in the center (Fig. 8.3). Dressed in red and veiled, she is shown in the praying position of an orant and is flanked by two smaller scenes that focus on her marriage and motherhood. This well-known painting was copied by other contemporary artists, but in Chacón's version, everything is particularly distorted: the central veiled woman takes on a Baroque glow, the woman in yellow to her right has become more like a young and bearded Christ, and the generic maternity scene to her left seems to have morphed into the Virgin and Child (Fig. 8.4).

The desire to project scenes of martyrdom into catacomb paintings which lacked them can be seen by comparing a watercolor copy of the scene of the Adoration of the Magi in the Catacomb of Domitilla with a photograph of the same painting. The painting is from a tomb covered by a small arch (a so-called *arcosolium*) and shows a seated Virgin Mary, child in her arms, who receives four magi dressed in exotic outfits (Fig. 8.5).<sup>29</sup>



**Fig. 8.5:** Rome, Catacomb of Domitilla, Adoration of the Magi. Photo: © Pontificia Commissione di Archeologia Cristiana, Permission n. 22/00033.

<sup>29</sup> It is common in early Christian paintings and mosaics to find four rather than three magi. The Bible does not specify their number, which only became codified later in the Middle Ages and was derived from their three gifts noted in the Gospels. See Francesca Paola Massara, "Magi," in *Temi di iconografia paleocristiana*, ed. F. Bisconti (Vatican City: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 2000), 205–11.



The copy was made by an anonymous artist for Bosio's *Roma sotterranea*.<sup>30</sup> Amazingly, the watercolor reproduction transformed the scene into an image of a woman who suffers martyrdom by burning, as four men approach and bring fuel to the fire (Fig. 8.6). The copyist's intent clearly was to exalt catacomb art as a testimony of the martyrs' struggle during the persecutions. Such copies were not simply misinterpretations of the original paintings; rather, the copyists deliberately altered the old scenes because they *wanted* to see the kind of Christian themes to which they were accustomed and whose presence they would expect to find in the catacombs.



**Fig. 8.6:** Watercolor copy of the Adoration of the Magi in the Catacomb of Domitilla, Rome. Biblioteca Vallicelliana, G6, f. 9r. Photo: © Biblioteca Vallicelliana.

The question of the copies' accuracy only emerged in the nineteenth century, again during the pontificate of Pius IX. This was generally a period of growing importance for reproductions of works of art and antiquities, both because of technological developments in printing and because such reproductions facilitated cultural exchanges between European states and, simultaneously, the efforts to create national identities grounded in the past. We will recall the many foreign painters stationed in Rome at the encouragement of Pius IX. Among the artists who enjoyed the freedom to explore the great excavations of Marchi and de Rossi (such as the catacomb of San Callisto)

<sup>30</sup> Rome, Vallicelliana Library, Ms. G6, f. 9r.

was the French painter Savinien Petit (1815–78).<sup>31</sup> He lived in Rome from 1845 to 1850 as a student at the École Française and busied himself in that period making water-color drawings and transparencies that reproduced various works of ancient Roman art, including catacomb paintings. Translated into lithographs, they were used as illustrations for several publications, such as the popular *Catacombes de Rome* (1851) written by the French architect Louis Perret. Both that book and Petit's copying activity were sponsored and financed by the French government. In fact, the very authorization to access the catacomb and copy the paintings stemmed from France's close diplomatic ties with the pope.

Petit's plates, which included previously unpublished scenes, raised the question of who was "authorized" to make "authentic" copies of the paintings adorning the catacombs. The *Catacombes de Rome* had not respected the unwritten (but by then established) rule that it was the Apostolic Camera, the central financial office of the Curia, that had the right to first disseminate the paintings discovered in the catacombs (in clear contrast with the freer practice of the sixteenth and seventeenth century described earlier). It was equally important for the Papal State to control the permissions granted to artists and authors interested in reproducing catacombs in order to control the process by which that art was made public outside Rome; in that way, the reproductions of images from early Christian Rome would adhere to the desired narrative. Creation *and* publication were the goals. This was, therefore, not only a scientific issue, but also a delicate political case in which the Church had to defend its primacy in publicizing its own heritage.

As a response to *Catacombes de Rome*, Marchi and de Rossi in 1852 secured the monopoly on reproductions of catacomb paintings. It now was the Commission of Sacred Archaeology (of which de Rossi was a prominent member) alone that could authorize scholars and artists to access the catacombs, and those decisions were made on a case-by-case basis. This kind of papal control of the study and diffusion of catacomb iconography certainly contradicted Pius IX's cultural policy that aimed to make early Christian images available worldwide in order to promote him as a strong leader. It also introduced the notion that Christian antiquities were the exclusive property of the church. Marchi and de Rossi were also acting in a scholarly sense, as they both understood the importance of making correct reproductions of catacomb paintings available at home and abroad. The two, finally, were pioneers in recognizing a potentially endangered heritage and the need to preserve it. Their efforts culminated in the creation of copies of the most important paintings of Roman catacombs (especially those from San Callisto) to be displayed in the Lateran Christian Museum (Fig. 8.7).<sup>32</sup>

31 Carla Mazzarelli, "Copie 'autentiche' delle catacombe nel secondo Ottocento: Marchi, Perret, De Rossi e il dibattito intorno alla riproduzione esatta," *Ricerche di storia dell'arte* 110/111 (2013): 89–102.

32 Utro, "Dalle catacombe al museo."



**Fig. 8.7:** Photograph of the copies of the catacomb paintings as set up at the Lateran Christian Museum, Vatican City. Private collection. Photo: Author.

The copyists chosen by Marchi and de Rossi had ample experience in exact archaeological reproduction. Their renderings, displayed on the walls of the museum, had great resonance and were keenly propagated by the media owned by the Papal State, first and foremost the Vatican press. All this was effectively put into service for the promotion of the Roman Church's earliest history and as a tool to counter ongoing threats to the unity of papal power by forces of secularization and, even more so, the newly created Italian state. The weapon was historical continuity.

In conclusion: the history of Christian archaeology cannot be divorced from the political use of the art of the catacombs and its modern dissemination. Politics informed the work of researchers and scholars who pursued their studies in periods when Christian archaeology was a *de facto* state-sponsored discipline. Their publications and production of copies (transparencies, watercolors, three-dimensional facsimiles) of catacomb paintings, in turn, solidified the relationship between catacomb archaeology and politics. In this, the papacy played a key role: at several historical junctures, when pressed by opposing forces (Protestantism, secularism, a unified Italy) it reasserted its authority by drawing on its most ancient past. And it did so by claiming exclusive control of that foundational artistic legacy.



Julia Faiers

# State Politics, Rural Piety, and the Complicated Afterlives of the Combefa Entombment Sculptures



**Fig. 9.1:** The Entombment, Pietà, and Crucifixion sculptures in 2018. Monestiés, Chapel of Saint-Jacques. Photo: Author.

In the late 1480s, Louis d'Amboise, the bishop of Albi between 1474 and 1503, installed in the private chapel of his episcopal summer palace in nearby Combefa a large sculptural ensemble depicting scenes of Christ's Passion: the Entombment, Pietà, and the Crucifixion (Fig. 9.1). Nearly three hundred years later, in 1774, residents of the closest village, Monestiés, loaded all the elements of this enormous, multipiece medieval monument onto oxcarts and transported them down a rocky, vertiginous path to the village's pilgrim hospital chapel. They have remained in this location ever since, despite several attempts over the centuries to move them both elsewhere in the village and farther afield to the regional capital of Albi.

This essay will discuss how the medieval statues were physically manipulated and symbolically interpreted through time by actors on a local, regional, and national level and how the changing uses and displays of the sculptures reflect their history. I focus on two periods in the complicated afterlives of this medieval monument—the nineteenth century and the 1940s and '50s—to reveal the role enacted by various political players, including the previously ignored but vital hyperlocal actors, the villagers themselves. I also show how conflicting motivations determined the fate and appearance of the Monestiés sculptures. The displacement of this ensemble in the late eighteenth century to a new location, for a new audience, and for new purposes effected a series of events that would see the statues used as metaphorical tools by various parties with conflicting political aims. Although my analysis concentrates on the co-option of the monument in two consecutive centuries, it also extends chronologically and geographically to perceive common themes around the politics of preservation and to demonstrate continuity in the actions and reactions of the different social groups involved. I conclude with a consideration of the monument's most recent iteration, a restoration and redisplay conducted in the 1990s to show how the strategies employed by heritage professionals demonstrate the crucial role that tourism played in remote rural locations in France during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. In economic terms, the stakes are high in sparsely populated villages like Monestiés, where tourism provides employment and income and can stem the exodus of inhabitants seeking work in urban centers. From the nineteenth century on, such financial considerations frequently affected the physical and political reconfigurations of these medieval sculptures.

## Ruin, Removal, and Dislocation

Due to their interventionist actions at the tail end of the eighteenth century, the villagers of Monestiés have been described in the written record as principal disruptors in the biography of the Entombment sculptures. I nuance their role through analysis of the manipulations and reception of the monument over the centuries. Louis d'Amboise's episcopal palace and its chapel fell into ruins over the course of the nineteenth century, but the Passion-cycle group escaped destruction due to a now-mythologized event in 1774 that saw the residents of the nearby village of Monestiés save the statues by loading them, along with other liturgical and decorative elements of the chapel, onto oxcarts. Villagers steered the oxen and their precious cargo down a steep, rocky track that led from the palace, taking them to the thirteenth-century hospital chapel

of Saint-Jacques in Monestiés, an extraordinary act loaded with symbolic significance reminiscent of medieval oxcart miracles.<sup>1</sup>

We should avoid explaining this spectacular migration purely through the prism of simple rural piety in which the local villagers singled out these medieval monuments to rescue them from certain destruction. However, the two subsequent periods in these statues' afterlives that I discuss below do clearly demonstrate the ongoing relevance of piety in how they were treated. But piety was not the only factor. The removal of the statues in 1774 was a dramatic intervention that came on the back of assiduous planning and protracted negotiation by a number of local dignitaries. A dossier in the Tarn departmental archives describes how, over three days in 1774, the road between the chateau of Combefa and Monestiés thrummed with activity, with more than thirty-one people driving a convoy of twenty-eight oxen and horses pulling fourteen wagons.<sup>2</sup> It names the artisans paid to lift and move the statues and the eight men who were remunerated for losing time in their workshops while carrying the chapel's thirty-two window panels (now lost). Financial gain evidently oiled the wagon wheels of the villagers' display of devotion.

The hospital chapel, which had been funded in the sixteenth century by a Confraternity of Saint-Jacques (St. James) consisted of a single room that served as a place of worship, a dormitory, a refectory for pilgrims, and as a meeting place for administrators. So the chapel that was to house the Entombment group had served from the start as a multipurpose space, with worship, sleeping, eating, and secular business all taking place under the same (often leaky) roof.<sup>3</sup> It was frequently in a bad state of repair, with the "poor in Christ" who sought refuge there often required to sleep on the floor because the hospital's four beds were not fit for purpose. By the eighteenth century, the space had acquired something of a lugubrious reputation, with mass no longer celebrated there. Why, then, was this large, religious monument rehoused in a seemingly ill-adapted place? As mentioned earlier, the Entombment's move was no act of spontaneity.

A Toulouse judge with familial links to Monestiés had acquired a fragment of the True Cross, which he donated in 1761 to the chapel of Saint-Jacques. In 1775, the year after the statues had arrived, Pope Pius VI authorized the establishment of a Confraternity of the True Cross. The statues of the Entombment would therefore have served as useful liturgical props for celebrating mass in the chapel. Moves were made to ac-

<sup>1</sup> Discussed succinctly in Barbara Abou-El-Haj, "The Urban Setting for Late Medieval Church Building: Reims and its Cathedral Between 1210 and 1240," *Art History* 11 (1988): 17–41, at 18–19.

<sup>2</sup> Albi, Archives départementales du Tarn (hereafter cited as ADT), 112 EDT GG8, published in Antoinette and Jacques Sangouard, "La chapelle de l'hôpital Saint-Jacques de Monestiés en Albigeois. 2. Les statues de Combefa de 1761 à 1825," *Revue du Tarn*, no. 158 (Summer 1995): 277–319, at 279.

<sup>3</sup> In 1682, for example, bad weather caused the collapse of part of the roof over the bell tower, requiring a new roof for the whole building. Antoinette and Jacques Sangouard, "La chapelle de l'hôpital Saint-Jacques de Monestiés en Albigeois," *Revue du Tarn*, no. 146 (Summer 1992): 177–95, at 180.

commodate the new relic appropriately, a process that started in 1758, even before the actual gift, with stones transported to the hospital for repair and rebuilding work. The commune then brought in a village carpenter to build a wooden reliquary chest and a local sculptor to fashion a reliquary in silver for the True Cross relic (this was the first of four reliquaries made to house this relic). Accounts reveal both the financial and practical contributions that members of the commune made for these religious items. The Monestiés carpenter Jean Dalet, for example, recorded in his account book in 1775 that it took him five-and-a-half days to build the reliquary chest, for which he charged ninety-nine livres, while the Rodez sculptor Alexis Salanier commanded 200 livres to build the reliquary itself.<sup>4</sup> Consider also the significant investment made to restore the medieval statues shortly after their arrival in the chapel. Expense accounts describe the purchase of iron bars to secure the heads and arms of two of the figures of Christ, along with the payment of 218 livres to a renowned local painter to restore the polychromy and gilding on the statues.<sup>5</sup>

An adjoining room was built next to the chapel in 1776, paid for by the parish priest, who wanted a sacristy as well as a place to house archives and hold meetings. The initial building work, the repair to the statues, and the addition of a sacristy all suggest a community—its congregation, artisans, and priest among others—unifying to accommodate and preserve its medieval religious artifacts. The first reliquary commission of 1775 and those that followed attest to the continued piety of the local community through more than a century of changing religious and political beliefs. I note this marker of continuity because the role the rural community played, from the moment the medieval statues left their original location, has previously been ignored or undervalued. The local agents' early engagement with the monument provides crucial background for understanding the display, treatment, and political exploitation of the Combefa Entombment sculptures during the mid-to-late nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries and the villagers' resistance to moving them from the chapel of Saint-Jacques.

## Revolutionary Village Politics

The French Revolution effected a tumultuous ideological rupture from monarchy to republic. How did the fallout that swept through the provinces, damning and saving religious buildings and artifacts in its wake, affect Louis d'Amboise's Entombment sculptures? From 1793, the small southern village of Monestiés, along with every other diocese in France, felt the social and physical effects of the introduction of the republican calendar, which, until Napoleon Bonaparte and Pope Pius VII signed the Concordat in 1801, effectively banned religious practice (Sundays and saints' feast days were

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<sup>4</sup> Sangouard and Sangouard, "La chapelle" (1992), 192.

<sup>5</sup> Sangouard and Sangouard, "La chapelle" (1995), 282.



no longer days of rest). More consequentially, many churches were transformed into “temples of Reason.” In Monestiés, the administration of the parish church and the chapel of Saint-Jacques passed from the diocese to the state-run Bureau de Bienfaisance (a nationwide charity organization created by the law of 27 November 1796 to replace the charity associations of the Ancien Régime) and the Confraternity of the True Cross was dissolved. The chapel was emptied of its contents, including furniture, liturgical objects, and the silver reliquary. The precious metal items were, in all likelihood, taken to the mint in Toulouse to be melted down, while the relic of the True Cross was hidden by a villager (to be brought back out of hiding in 1805). The statues also escaped destruction, mutilation, or confiscation. Eugène de Combettes-Labourelie, a local aristocrat who lived in Monestiés, reported that, during the revolutionary period, a popular assembly was convened in the hospital chapel, but that the statues avoided unwanted attention due to draperies that separated them from the meeting space.<sup>6</sup> The statues appear to have been lucky survivors in a case of out of sight, out of mind, although their fate might have been less propitious had they been made from precious metal rather than plain stone. The revolutionary government was principally concerned with funding its political ambitions by plundering the spoils of the Ancien Régime’s religious past. Violent acts of iconoclasm against symbols of feudalism, however, played out across the country, most famously in the capital with the destruction of the royal tombs at the Abbey of Saint-Denis and the desecration of Notre-Dame’s facade, when the stone statues of Old Testament kings were attacked after being misidentified as medieval French kings. Such zeal was not always the work of the angry mob. Occasionally, a lone citizen would be moved by patriotic spirit to destroy the financially worthless religious talismans of the medieval past. Astrid Swenson notes the undocumented but persistent anecdote of an apothecary from Dijon said to have beheaded a statue at the local church of Notre-Dame every day on his way to work.<sup>7</sup> Worthless though they may have been to the state treasury, the Entombment statues of Monestiés had luck on their side when the revolutionary winds blew through their tiny village.

The later political use of the statues followed on the heels of this volatile revolutionary period, in which the decisions made by a few in Paris affected millions of rural Christians in the provinces. Although Monestiés had to submit to national rulings, the community maintained significant continuity through its administrative personnel. When the running of the chapel passed from clergy to state at the end of the eighteenth century, many of the bourgeois individuals involved in the use and management of the chapel up until that point—the clerics, notaries, and magistrates—found themselves performing the same roles regarding the chapel, just under their new state-mandated municipal titles.<sup>8</sup> Throughout the political turmoil of the nine-

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6 ADT, Series J: 32.

7 Astrid Swenson, *The Rise of Heritage: Preserving the Past in France, Germany and England, 1789–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 31.

8 Sangouard and Sangouard, “La chapelle” (1995), 286.

teenth century, however, during which religion found itself politicized, what were regarded as communal spaces in rural communities, such as the parish church and the multifunctional hospital chapel in Monestiés, became ideological battle grounds.

## A Compulsion to Preserve and a Desire to Stage Medieval Art

The Entombment statues may have escaped destruction during the Revolution, but as with any religious statuary in the early part of the nineteenth century, their *raison d'être* was now questioned by the authorities. Throughout France, those individuals seeking to preserve religious art had to justify their position for fear of being regarded as counterrevolutionaries. The conflicting moods regarding such contentious religious objects in different parts of France in the early part of the century provide crucial context for the rationale behind the display of the Entombment statues in the chapel and explains how they were appropriated by the authorities on a local level. The themes of center versus periphery and national versus regional came into increasingly sharp focus as the turbulent century progressed. Medieval monuments throughout France, including in Monestiés, became pawns in political power games being waged in accord with ideological currents that varied by institution. By the start of the nineteenth century, French people everywhere in the country had witnessed the demolition and destruction of their religious built heritage. Some of these witnesses, acting on what historian Daniel Cazes describes as the “rescue reflex,” effectively commandeered the broken pieces of classical and medieval culture that these demolitions revealed.<sup>9</sup>

In Paris, Alexandre Lenoir (1761–1839) picked his way through the revolutionary rubble of the capital’s churches to display medieval monuments—or bits of them—in his Musée des Monuments Français (open from 1795 to 1816). Lenoir had to defend his actions vehemently, arguing that he was motivated by the need to preserve historical objects rather than by any ideological allegiance to what they had come to represent to the revolutionaries.<sup>10</sup> From 1800, in its attempt to repair the broken bonds between nation and church, Napoleon’s regime closed down the heritage collection amassed by Lenoir and reinstated several of its tombs in Saint-Denis. For the same reason, it began to repatriate other religious monuments back to their original churches if they remained standing. In 1816, with the regime change and the return of the monarchy, the collection

<sup>9</sup> Daniel Cazes, “Alexandre Du Mège et le Musée des Antiques de Toulouse,” in *De las ánforas al museo: Estudios dedicados a Miguel Beltrán Lloris* (Zaragoza: Institución “Fernando el Católico,” 2015): 265–77, at 267.

<sup>10</sup> Alexandra Stara, *The Museum of French Monuments, 1795–1816: “Killing Art to Make History”* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2013); Francis Haskell, *History and its Images. Art and the Interpretation of the Past* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 241.

assembled by Lenoir was officially closed once and for all. Many of its secular monuments, however, found their way to the Louvre, in a gallery of French sculpture created especially for them by the director general of museums, Vivant Denon. And despite the closure of Lenoir's museum, his concept of presenting sculpture chronologically proved popular elsewhere in the capital, inspiring the display of the collection of medieval artifacts at the Hôtel de Cluny in the 1830s by the antiquarian Alexandre du Sommerard.<sup>11</sup> Though open for only twenty years, Lenoir's Musée des Monuments Français exerted a powerful influence, igniting scholars' curiosity to reengage with the sculptural remains of a feudal past the Revolution had fought so hard to destroy.

The fallout from the period of revolutionary destruction and the emergence of the display of medieval artifacts in Paris gave rise to an era where heritage preservation, religion, and politics intermingled. In 1839, the government created the Direction des Cultes (Ministry of Worship) to administer clerical salaries and to fund essential upkeep of church buildings (4% of state expenditure under the Restoration of 1814–48, reducing to just 2% under the Third Republic between 1870 and 1940).<sup>12</sup> Whereas under the Ancien Régime the ecclesiastical elites had underpinned politics and given legitimacy to secular rulers, now the power dynamics were reversed, with the state and its civil servants becoming the protectors of religion and its sites of worship. Prosper Mérimée (1803–70), the inspector of historic monuments from 1834 to 1860, was himself a non-believer who classified monuments according to their cultural and historical value rather than their religious function. In this official role, Mérimée visited the south of France, including the Tarn department, in 1834. His account of the voyage commented on the cathedral and the collegiate church of Saint-Salvy in Albi, the chateau of Castelnaud, and the village of Cordes.<sup>13</sup> But it was silent on Monestiés, which was yet to attract the attention of such national actors.

At a more local level, in the southwest of France, the antiquarian Alexandre Du Mège (1780–1862) shared the same compulsion to preserve as Lenoir, his northern compatriot. In 1806, he congratulated Pierre Sentetz, a colleague living in Auch (Gers), for finding and bringing an early Christian sarcophagus to his home. Du Mège also pleaded with Sentetz to extract as quickly as possible the carved stone inscriptions found in the old Benedictine cloister of the Church of St. Orens in Auch, saying, "If these objects appear primitive to you and you don't wish to keep them in your own home, I will take care of them. I will pay you what they are worth and for their carriage. But above all, save them: the monuments of the Middle Ages are becoming, thanks to Revolutionary vandalism and the ignorance of those throughout our nation who acquire them, of an extraordinary rarity."<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Stara, *Museum of French Monuments*, 33–36.

<sup>12</sup> Denis Pelletier, *Les catholiques en France depuis 1815* (Paris: La Découverte, 1997), 7.

<sup>13</sup> Prosper Mérimée, *Notes d'un voyage dans le Midi de la France* (Paris: Adam Biro, 1989), 237.

<sup>14</sup> Marcel Durliat, "Alexandre Du Mège et le Moyen Age à Toulouse," in *Le "Gothique" retrouvé avant Viollet-le-Duc* (Paris: Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques et des Sites, 1979): 85–91, at 85.

Du Mège made unearthing such items his life's work, assuming the role from 1810 onward as inspector of antiquities for the Haute-Garonne (of which Toulouse was the capital). Du Mège's task to describe and catalog monuments was then extended to include the departments of Aude, Gers, the Basses-Pyrénées, and Tarn (where he would, in 1811, encounter the Entombment statues in Monestiés). In 1815, he proposed to the mayor of Toulouse the idea to create "for our region the most beautiful gallery of antiquities that could possibly exist."<sup>15</sup> Inspired in part by Lenoir's work in Paris, Du Mège went on to assemble an astonishing collection of ancient and medieval monuments. In Toulouse's relatively new museum, founded in 1794 and housed in the old Augustinian church, he displayed classical, medieval, and Renaissance sculptures in separate cloisters. Prints of these galleries offer a useful insight into how sacred art was exhibited in a once-religious, now secular setting. One shows the wealthy classes of Toulouse strolling



**Fig. 9.2:** Gallery of the Middle Ages in the former convent of the Augustinians, Toulouse; drawing (nineteenth c.) from a lithograph by Charles Mercereau (1822–64). Bibliothèque municipale de Toulouse, Fonds Ancely. Photo: Wikimedia Commons (public domain).

15 Cazes, "Alexandre Du Mège," 268.

through Du Mège's Gallery of the Middle Ages (Fig. 9.2). Viewing medieval religious sculpture seems to have been a leisure pastime for the urban bourgeoisie or at least for those who appreciated it as an edifying, romantic backdrop to their perambulations.

Most important for how we analyze the reception of the Entombment sculptures in the second half of the nineteenth century, Du Mège's enterprise reveals how the first generation of antiquarians after the ravages of the Revolution staged medieval art in the south of the country. The Gallery of the Middle Ages in Toulouse demonstrated this on a large scale, but even more illuminating is Du Mège's fictitious and anachronistic reimagining of the medieval mausoleum of Jean Tissendier (?–1348), bishop of Rieux. Du Mège had mounted in a blind arch of the chapter room in the church/museum of the Augustins a genuflecting statue of the bishop offering up a miniature version of the chapel he had commissioned for the convent of the Cordeliers in Toulouse (Fig. 9.3). This image was framed by fifteenth-century statues of John the Evangelist and Mary Magdalene, each from a different church. The reimagined monument follows Lenoir's montage approach at the Musée des Monuments Français where, for example, he had reassembled the tombs of Héloïse and Abélard beneath a



**Fig. 9.3:** “Mausoleum” of Jean Tissendier in the former convent of the Augustinians, Toulouse, ca. 1820. Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Institut de France. Ms 4178. Photo from Cazes, “Alexandre Du Mège.”

newly designed arched canopy made from debris retrieved from Saint-Denis.<sup>16</sup> Given the historical southern French resistance to directives from the capital, it seems more likely that it was Du Mège's impassioned vision of the medieval past that had a greater impact on the nineteenth-century renovation and representation of the Entombment sculptures in Monestiés than did Lenoir's collection in Paris.

By contrast, the aesthetic adopted in Monestiés for its restoration of the statues later in the century ran counter to Du Mège's political stance. Despite devoting his career to preserving the material heritage of southern France, Du Mège doggedly pursued a centralized approach, in which he aimed, as had Lenoir, to remove sculptures and architectural fragments from their original sites and to gather them all together under one roof. In terms of the politics of preservation, then, this antiquarian frequently worked in opposition to local municipal actors throughout the region who wanted to hang on to their religious heritage. His ambition to collect all the region's antiquities "menaced by vandalism and ignorance," which one scholar has described as bordering on megalomania, saw him come up against opposition in the Pyrenees, for example, where mayors and clergy from various mountain villages decried his actions as disregarding sacred objects and disrespecting property rights.<sup>17</sup>

## The Politics of Restoration and Display

Although the Entombment, Pietà, and Crucifixion from Combefa had escaped revolutionary destruction, the sculptures' survival hung in the balance due to the ruinous humidity of the pilgrim hospital chapel in Monestiés. But preserving these medieval statues in their new location became a political issue. The previously mentioned "rescue reflex" finally resulted in action in the 1860s, fueled not so much by the villagers but by the interventions of antiquarians and historians. The Société Française d'Archéologie (SFA), created in 1834 to make the study of historical monuments a precise scientific discipline, held its annual congress in Albi in 1863.<sup>18</sup> On 13 June 1863, the society took an excursion to Cordes and Monestiés. One of its members, Elie Rossignol, wrote a report for the publication, which appeared in 1864. He offered the first description of how the statues were then displayed—perhaps spruced up for the historians' visit—which reveals that the Pietà was at this point placed against the wall above the Entombment and that the statues of the attending figures were arranged on either side of the entombed Christ. If he noticed the Crucifixion sculpture during the visit, he did not deem it worthy of note in his report.

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<sup>16</sup> Stara, *Museum of French Monuments*, 27–30.

<sup>17</sup> Durliat, "Alexandre Du Mège," 86.

<sup>18</sup> For details on the growth in learned societies through the nineteenth century, see Stephane Gerson, *The Pride of Place: Local Memories and Political Culture in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 3.

While he also failed to describe the state of preservation of the statues, he observed that the villagers were “justifiably so proud to possess them,” a comment that points to the local awareness in the mid-nineteenth century of the patrimonial treasure they held.<sup>19</sup> Rossignol’s report situated the monument in the historical record and the visit overall marked a change in the statues’ fortunes. For the first time since their removal from their original location in the chapel at Combefa, they were seen by a group of educated, elite men from elsewhere in France as well as from the region, whose key collective purpose was to preserve and study medieval monuments. These men agreed that the statues should be saved; and that they should be restored to their former glory.

To restore the statues would cost money, a resource lacking in the tiny rural village. State funding was not an option because, while restoration funds could be granted to *monuments historiques* (buildings officially recognized as having cultural value by the state-run Commission) they did not extend to freestanding statues. Private financing was therefore required.<sup>20</sup> In 1866, Jérôme Ludovic, Marquis de Solages (an old aristocratic family from nearby Carmaux), offered five thousand francs to enlarge the parish church of Saint-Pierre in Monestiés, with the goal of installing the Entombment group there instead of having it remain in its current location in the chapel of Saint-Jacques. The marquis’s donation was approved by the minister of fine arts, who said that the sculptures “would be infinitely better off” there.<sup>21</sup> But the local Bureau de Bienfaisance vehemently opposed the move and hastily organized a petition, signed by many inhabitants, which they submitted to the Commission des Monuments Historiques on 6 August. Without furnishing any justification or explanation, the petition stated that the statues “should not be sold, donated, and especially not moved [from their current location].” On 9 September, the order was given to restore them in their present location. The Commission, however, rescinded the offer to co-fund the restoration. The commune had won the fight but not necessarily the war, as the Marquis de Solages’s contribution was dependent on the statues moving to the parish church. The municipality still had to raise the money to restore the statues.

Already in 1865, an aristocratic inhabitant of Monestiés, Eugène de Combettes-Labourelie, together with Édouard Nelli, a local sculptor, had impressed upon the mayor the urgency of the situation regarding the statues’ deteriorating state, suggesting they arrange a lottery to raise funds. The mayor of Monestiés wrote to the Empress Eugénie, the wife of Napoleon III, to “ask for assistance which will guarantee success in our enterprise.”<sup>22</sup> In addition to the written plea, Nelli sent miniature copies he had made of the Entombment statues, so that the empress, a fervent Catholic, might better

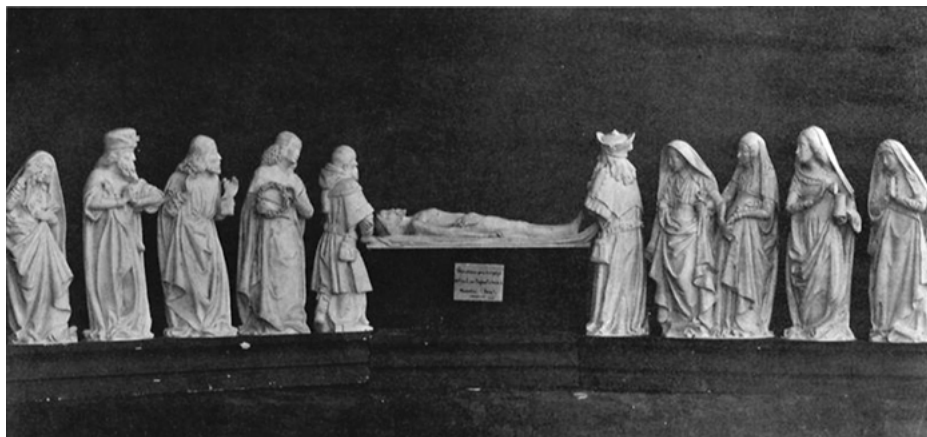
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19 Elie Rossignol, “Excursion à Cordes et à Monestiés, le 13 juin 1863,” in *Congrès archéologique de France, 30<sup>ème</sup> session. Séances générales tenues à Rodez, à Albi et au Mans en 1863 par la Société française d’archéologie pour la conservation des monuments historiques* (Paris: Derache, 1864): 442–45, at 444.

20 Sangouard and Sangouard, “La chapelle” (1995), 290.

21 For this and the next quote, see Sangouard and Sangouard, “La chapelle” (1995), 304.

22 Sangouard and Sangouard, “La chapelle” (1995), 290.



**Fig. 9.4:** Edouard Nelli, Miniature copies of the Entombment ensemble from Monestiés, ca. 1865. Photo: Ministère de la Culture (France), Médiathèque du patrimoine et de la photographie (objets mobiliers).

visualize the monument the villagers wanted to save (Fig. 9.4). Eugénie obliged, offering the main prize in the raffle that the prefect had organized: a table service enclosed in a case marked with the imperial crest. Nelli made a second group of miniature copies of the Entombment to offer as the second prize, although who won them remains unknown. The registers of the Bureau de Bienfaisance show that the lottery raised the ten thousand francs needed to embark on restoring the statues in the damp chapel.

The fundraising success also appeased members of the municipality who were disgruntled at the up-front costs required to employ Nelli to produce miniature models of the Entombment. We should also note that the artist's use of the situation of the deteriorating statues to his own financial and commercial advantage shows another facet of how individuals could capitalize on medieval artworks during this period. In addition to the sets of the Entombment sculptures made for the empress and the lottery, Nelli made another, which he submitted to the exhibition of art and technology (*Exposition des Beaux-Arts et de l'Industrie*) held in Toulouse in 1865. He received a silver medal and the Cross of the Pontifical Order of St. Gregory the Great for his work.<sup>23</sup> These accolades resulted in the young sculptor's name appearing in the press, thereby advertising his professional skills.<sup>24</sup> Several other iterations of his miniatures have been conserved, one of which was donated by the Combettes-Labourelle family to the parish church in Brens (close to Gaillac in Tarn), where they are now displayed in a dark cabinet in a side chapel (Fig. 9.5).

<sup>23</sup> *Exposition des beaux-arts et de l'industrie à Toulouse: Année 1865* (Toulouse: Viguier, 1866), 560.

<sup>24</sup> A. Cavalié, "Exposition de Toulouse, Groupe du XVe siècle: Christ au Tombeau, Réduction de M. Edouard Nelli," *Journal du Tarn* (28 June 1865): 2–3.





**Fig. 9.5:** Édouard Nelli, Miniature copies of the Entombment ensemble from Monestiés. Brens, Church of Saint-Eugène. The sculptures were photographed outside their permanent vitrine in 2021. Photo: Author.

## Restoration, Reinterpretation, and Viollet-le-Duc

There are two important strands to consider regarding the politics of the fundraising and restoration program at Monestiés. The first is the need to situate the restoration of medieval monuments in the context of a frenetic church-building program that took place in France following the Concordat of 1801, during the Restoration of the Bourbon monarchy, and into the Second Empire (1852–70). Nearly a quarter of all the currently extant churches in France were built in the nineteenth century, a total of nine thousand new places of worship. The Restoration of 1814 had reestablished the national network of congregations banned in 1792, driving the need to create new churches and revive existing ones, particularly in places with a growing population. In the diocese of the expanding city of Toulouse, for example, whose population more than tripled between 1830 and 1872, 186 churches underwent significant building or

decoration programs. Of these, eighty-two were built from scratch and 104 were restorations.<sup>25</sup> Under the Ancien Régime, property owners in the parish usually covered the costs of church maintenance and restoration. But after the general rule of 30 December 1809, in villages with fewer than five thousand inhabitants these commitments were taken up by the mayor, the priest, three members of the commune nominated by the bishop, and two by the prefect. Despite this nationwide practice of appointing a relatively diverse body of local people to manage the income and expenditures of the parish, the responsibility of maintaining or restoring churches often led to the long-lasting debt of the parish and the commune.<sup>26</sup>

Accounts detailing the cost of restorations in the popular neo-Gothic style show that repairing original medieval monuments could be more expensive than commissioning brand new ones. A case in point is the tiny church of Saint-Jean-Baptiste in Mouillac (Tarn-et-Garonne), a village as geographically isolated as Monestiés. Here, the priest and inhabitants raised money to pay the renowned Toulouse manufacturers, the Virebent family, to produce a retable depicting scenes from the Passion. These neo-medieval sculptures were installed in 1874 and cost 2,169 francs.<sup>27</sup> This puts into perspective the 10,000 francs the villagers of Monestiés raised to restore their medieval Entombment group, revealing the significant financial difference between fixing up medieval sculptures versus creating new ones that emulated them.

Moreover, the nascent national debates about restoration that developed alongside the idea of a *monument historique* and the growing taste for medieval religious imagery determined the Entombment renovation program and the monument's display in Monestiés. These factors also affected its reception and practical uses for the community. The prefectural commission tasked with arranging the restoration program comprised men of influence. They were all local save for César Daly (born in Verdun, in the north), whose extensive work on the cathedral of Albi had introduced and clearly endeared him to the medieval built heritage of the south.<sup>28</sup> Daly and Combettes-Labourelie shared the attitudes and approaches of national cultural heavyweights such as Mérimée and Eugène Viollet-le-Duc (1814–79). Daly dedicated his 1861 book, in which he advocated the use of competitions to reinvigorate public art, to Mérimée. And he was a professional colleague of Viollet-le-Duc, who, at the time this tiny rural renovation project began, was the national *architecte du gouvernement* and

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25 Nelly Desseaux-They, *La manufacture Virebent, l'art sacré: Les maîtres bâtisseurs toulousains* (Toulouse: Terrefort, 2020), 9.

26 Pelletier, *Les catholiques en France*, 9, 20.

27 Desseaux-They, *La manufacture Virebent*, 94–95.

28 The prefectural commission included the mayor of Monestiés, the general councillor and mayor of the nearby commune of Carmaux, the diocesan architect Daly (a member of the SFA congress party that made the excursion to Monestiés in 1863 who had received the Legion of Honor in 1861), the departmental architect Emile Hess, the notary Angély Cavalié, Combettes-Labourelie, and the departmental archivist Emile Jolibois.

inspector general of diocesan buildings.<sup>29</sup> Combettes-Labourelie, for his part, possessed in his library a copy of the seventh volume of Viollet-le-Duc's dictionary, in which the author favored repainting rather than the simple repair of medieval paintings. Although the national state was not interested in funding the restoration of this southern monument, it exercised considerable cultural influence. Thus, the commissioning body of dignitaries and the artists carrying out the project made choices that reflected their satellite status in the orbit of the national taste maker and heritage influencer, Viollet-le-Duc.

In October 1866, the chapel was emptied and the statues stored in a specially built outbuilding. The sculptor Nelli prepared the statues to be painted by the Toulouse artist Joseph Engalières, a member of the SFA who was among the visiting party of 1863 to Monestiés.<sup>30</sup> Engalières had recently made a name for himself restoring the rediscovered medieval wall paintings of Notre-Dame du Bourg in Rabastens (Haut-Garonne) and would later secure the prestigious work of repainting several chapels in Albi's cathedral.<sup>31</sup> Both Nelli and Engalières adopted the interventionist approach of Viollet-le-Duc, "perfecting" and reinterpreting medieval art through a modern lens. Nelli added or reworked broken elements of the statues such as fingers and noses. He replaced the medieval altar commissioned by Louis d'Amboise with a new one made from regional limestone. He sawed the original altar in half lengthwise, using one piece as the base for the Pietà sculpture and the other for the base of the gisant of the entombed Christ.<sup>32</sup> As to Engalières, he repainted the polychromed statues with oil paint, using colors in keeping with the popular medievalizing Troubadour style.<sup>33</sup> He then treated them with wax to prolong the life of the polychromed surfaces.

A photograph taken shortly after the restoration shows that he also embellished the gilding and decoration on some of the figures' clothing and painted a theatrical backdrop of skeuomorphic curtains, using motifs that came straight from Viollet-le-Duc's catalogue of "medieval" design (Figs. 9.6 and 9.7).<sup>34</sup> Beneath the figure of the entombed Christ, Engalières added in Gothic script an acknowledgment of the program's benefactors (while conserving for posterity his own role as restorer): "This restoration was completed under the patronage of Monseigneur Lyonnet, archbishop of Albi, and

29 César Daly, *Des concours pour les monuments publics dans le passé, le présent et l'avenir par M. César Daly, Architecte du Gouvernement, Directeur-Fondateur et Propriétaire de la revue "Revue générale de l'Architecture et des Travaux Publics"* (Paris: Morel, 1861).

30 *Congrès archéologique de France, 30<sup>ème</sup> session* (1864), 268–72, at 270.

31 Jean-Louis Biget and Céline Xifra-Vanacker, "Les ambitieuses transformations du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle," in *Albi: Joyau du Languedoc*, ed. Jean Legrez (Strasbourg: La Nuée bleu, 2015), 112–33, at 125–29.

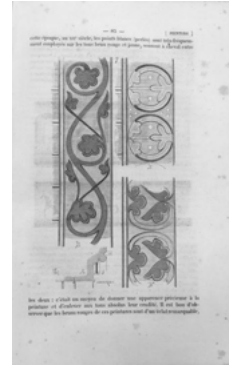
32 Sangouard and Sangouard, "La chapelle" (1995), 298.

33 Marie-Claude Chaudonneret, *Fleury Richard et Pierre Révoil: La peinture troubadour* (Paris: Arthena, 1980).

34 Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture Française* (Paris: A. Morel, 1864), 7:85, 95, 97.



**Fig. 9.6:** Postcard (late nineteenth century; photograph taken after 1868) showing the restored and redisplayed Entombment sculptures in the chapel of Saint-Jacques, Monestiés. Photo: Archives départementales du Tarn.



**Fig. 9.7:** Examples of painted decorative medieval designs from Viollet-le-Duc's *Dictionnaire raisonné* (1864). Photo: Author.



**Fig. 9.8:** Photograph of the tomb of Christ, with the neo-Gothic inscription added in 1868, ca. 1925. Photo: Ministère de la Culture – Médiathèque du patrimoine et de la photographie, Dist. Grand Palais Rmn / Georges Estève.

Monsieur De Levezou de Vesins, prefect of Tarn. Under the care of the members of the Bureau de Bienfaisance, the mayor Palazy, the priest Palazy . . . in 1868” (Fig. 9.8).<sup>35</sup>

This inscription, removed in 1952 during another restoration campaign, asserted the collaborative nature of the funding and management of the Monestiés chapel restoration project in the 1860s, although the order of the names surely speaks of the political hierarchy, in which the beneficence of the archbishop in Albi and the departmental prefect outranked the villagers.

The program of the 1860s did more than just restore the chapel and the statues in it. It returned the chapel to its original purpose as a place of worship. The political turbulence of the first half of the century and the problem of dampness in the chapel had disrupted religious practice there. Records of expenses claimed by the Bureau de Bienfaisance show the purchase for the chapel of liturgical objects required for saying mass.<sup>36</sup> The new arrangement of the three elements—the Pietà displayed at the west end of the chapel facing the Entombment and the Crucifixion hung over the door between the chapel and sacristy—*did* change the viewer’s experience of the original ensemble, which had been designed to decorate the east wall of Louis d’Amboise’s chapel in a triangular composition. While the nineteenth-century restoration repurposed and revalorized the sculptures, it separated the three works and so nullified their theological unity. Their composition in the Combefa chapel had faded from public memory, in part because of a lack of knowledge about the ensemble’s original arrangement and in part because of the cultural value placed by the “heritage makers” on the different sculptural elements.<sup>37</sup> The Entombment formed a complete, physically impressive display of medieval sculpture worthy of rescue, whereas the Pietà and Crucifixion were regarded as subordinate. Such a hierarchy is reflected in the decision by the Commission des Monuments Historiques to classify each element separately rather than to acknowledge the unity of the ensemble. The Entombment was listed in 1904, the Pietà in 1908, and the Crucifix not until 1953.

## Rural Piety and Local Pride in the 1940s and 1950s

The nineteenth-century renovation ensured that mass continued to be celebrated regularly in the chapel until its deconsecration in 1902, not long before the 1905 law of the separation of church and state effectively secularized the nation. This changed the use of the chapel, which now served to host concerts, meetings, and other community events. Nonetheless, the inhabitants of Monestiés continued to try to keep the religious medieval monuments there, perhaps in recognition of their significance to the

35 Sangouard and Sangouard, “La chapelle” (1995), 294.

36 Bureau de Bienfaisance, *Registre des délibérations 1853–1909*, ADT, 170 EDT 1 Q 1.

37 Swenson, *Rise of Heritage*, 66–143.

community. Whereas in the nineteenth century the villagers had fought to keep the restored Entombment from being moved to the parish church by national directives and by local benefactor Solages, in the twentieth century they engaged in a genuine David-and-Goliath battle to prevent it from being moved to the regional capital of Albi. In the eyes of the regional politicians, the Entombment and its sister statues became during the 1940s and '50s a potential tourist attraction, but one only useful if the sculptures could be moved away from the remote village of Monestiés. In February 1949, for example, local heritage enthusiast Pierre de Gorsse wrote to the director general of architecture to push for a transfer of the statues to Albi, saying "There is no need to stress how worthwhile such a transfer of the statues would be in terms of conservation, display, and appeal."<sup>38</sup> The Commission des Monuments Historiques concurred, adding that they wanted to see the Entombment installed in "the chapel of Louis d'Amboise" in the former episcopal palace in Albi.<sup>39</sup> For this move, the conservator of the museum in Albi offered the commune of Monestiés five thousand francs per month for the loan of the medieval statues (the duration of the agreement was not specified) and would provide casts of the sculptures to stand in their stead in the chapel of Saint-Jacques. Still, the villagers of Monestiés would not give up their medieval statues.

Perhaps scenarios such as this were playing out across France in the mid-twentieth century. Was it common for obdurate rural village communities, in the face of pressure from regional or national state bodies, to dig their heels in to keep medieval monuments in the churches where they had belonged (some might say languished)? There are records of clashes between national government officials and locals over restoration projects in the nineteenth century. Examples include the Romanesque Church of the Madeleine at Vézelay or Viollet-le-Duc's removal of reliquary chests of the "Holy Bodies" from the tower to the tribunes in the basilica of Saint-Sernin at Toulouse.<sup>40</sup> But I am unaware of specific cases of dissent in the twentieth century. Still, the situation in Monestiés appears to reflect a more widespread rural distrust of urban, centralized authorities that were seen to interfere in village life. In any case, the defiance of the villagers of Monestiés, however noble and genuine, exasperated the civil servants. Take a report issued in 1949 by the Commission des Monuments Historiques titled "To persuade the recalcitrant municipality [of Monestiés] to consent to the removal of the Entombment sculptures."<sup>41</sup> It stated that the display in Monestiés was "insufficient," that

<sup>38</sup> Sangouard and Sangouard, "La chapelle" (1995), 304.

<sup>39</sup> It is not clear which chapel they mean, as Louis d'Amboise is not known to have built or even redecorated a chapel at the episcopal palace in Albi.

<sup>40</sup> Respectively discussed by Kevin D. Murphy, *Memory and Modernity: Viollet-le-Duc at Vézelay* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000) and Nathalie Heinrich, *La fabrique du patrimoine: "De la cathédrale à la petite cuillère"* (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Paris, 2009), 81.

<sup>41</sup> Communal archives of Monestiés, ADT, 170 EDT.

Albi's episcopal palace chapel offered instead a suitable location for the statues, and that this city was incomparably more attractive to visitors.

On this last point, others shared the view that Monestiés was a backwater. The debate played out in the press as well as behind closed doors between civil servants. One local daily newspaper stated in a piece about the statues in December 1949: "You can't ask tourists without a car to make a huge detour to see eleven statues, however admirable they might be."<sup>42</sup> By contrast, the inspector of the Commission des Monuments Historiques noted that "the chapel is less than fifty meters from the route between Carmaux and Cordes, which could be easily incorporated into what is essentially a tourist circuit."<sup>43</sup> It appears here that the inspector wavered over the issue of the statues' current site. If, as he stated, the chapel of Saint-Jacques was within easy reach of a convenient thoroughfare, the case to move them to somewhere more central lost its credibility. Again, the stakes were high for the villagers relying on keeping their tourist attraction. If they were to be moved to Albi, would anyone ever again bother to visit their village?

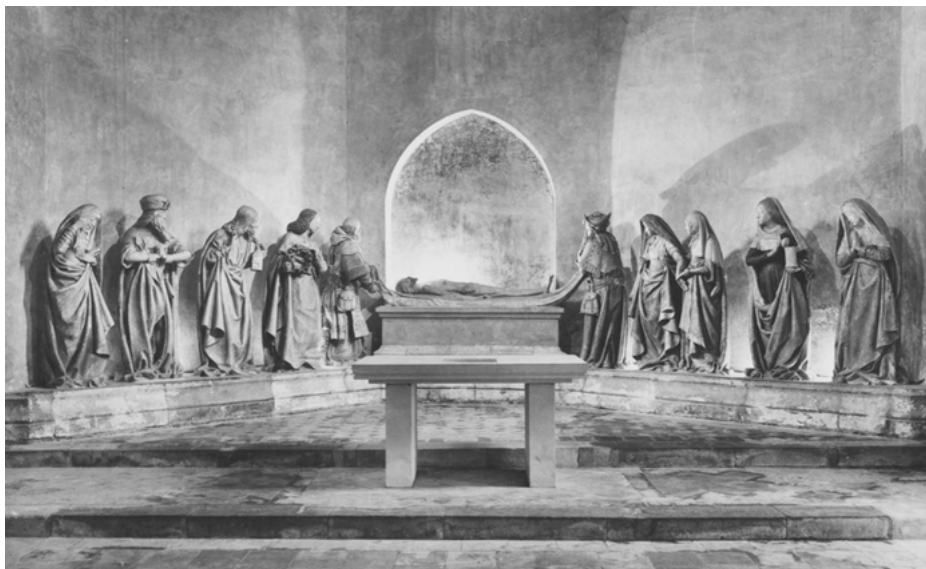
## Mid-century Restoration and Display

Despite the seeming inevitability of the move to Albi, the village of Monestiés won the right to keep the statues in the chapel and even received funding to restore them. In 1952, the restoration project was instigated and led by Jean Taralon, then inspector of the *monuments historiques* in the Tarn. Taralon became particularly influential in the reception of religious medieval monuments in the 1960s when he cocurated a groundbreaking exhibition at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris of French church treasures, *Les Trésors des églises de France*. The restoration program in Monestiés was carried out by the sculptor Marcel Mainponte and by Michel Mastorakis, head architect of the Monuments Historiques, for the fabric of the building (Fig. 9.9). Mainponte was tasked by Taralon to remove the nineteenth-century overpainting to recover the medieval hues, but he used harsh detergents that damaged some of the original polychromy and then touched up the painting and polished the statues. The architect Mastorakis, meanwhile, removed all of the chapel's richly painted décor of the 1860s, stripping the walls, removing the chandeliers, and replacing the old altar with a pared-down modernist example. The front entrance of the chapel was bricked up, meaning that the interior of the chapel was deprived of air and natural light; it was now accessible only through the sacristy. Spotlights, added to the niche behind the entombed Christ, cast dramatic shadows on the sculptures, a reimagining just as staged

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<sup>42</sup> Yves Andouard, "Les statues de Monestiés: Le chef-d'œuvre sous le boisseau," *Sud Ouest* (1 December, 1949), n.p.

<sup>43</sup> Sangouard and Sangouard, "La chapelle" (1995), 304.



**Fig. 9.9:** Postcard (ca. 1960) showing the Entombment sculptures after restoration in the 1950s. Photo: Archives départementales du Tarn.

as the nineteenth-century display. In short, the restorers created a modernist grotto in which the pure form of the statues was celebrated against a stark background more reminiscent of a contemporary art gallery or museum. From the theatrical staging of the nineteenth-century restoration, the Entombment sculptures in the 1950s were transformed into a different kind of anachronistic display, as hallowed exhibits for a secular audience.

The mid-century aesthetic adopted in this redisplay can be considered a political choice in that the people determining the program for rural Monestiés were cultural heavyweights on a national scale, just as they had been in the nineteenth century. The curators at the museum in Albi, who wanted the statues for themselves, oversaw a large collection of works by the town's poster boy, Toulouse-Lautrec. The museum's focus in the 1950s was modern art, not medieval, and in 1961 it marked the centenary of Toulouse-Lautrec with a big exhibition about the artist. On a national scale, however, medieval art enjoyed the limelight in Paris with *Les Trésors des églises de France* in 1965 (Fig. 9.10). In this landmark exhibition, hailed by Francis Salet as "the cultural event of 1965,"<sup>44</sup> religious objects from the treasuries of churches all over France were displayed and the reliquary of St. Foy in Conques (Aveyron) pitched as its star exhibit.

<sup>44</sup> Francis Salet, review of *Les Trésors des églises de France*, by Jean Taralon and Roseline Maître-Devallon, *Bulletin Monumental* (1966): 450–53, at 450.





**Fig. 9.10:** Exhibition view of *Les Trésors des églises de France*, Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, 1965. Photo: Ministère de la Culture, France.

That work appears on the front cover of the exhibition catalogue and earned a full five pages of commentary.<sup>45</sup> While objects from the south, the St. Foy reliquary among them, formed an integral part of the exhibition in the capital, inexplicably the Tarn department took a back seat. Indeed, and despite Taralon's personal investment in the religious heritage of that department while inspector of *monuments historiques* in the 1950s, the ecclesiastical treasures of the Tarn department did not feature heavily, with only Albi cathedral loaning a thirteenth-century enameled and gilded cross made in Limoges.

Although one cannot precisely compare the differing environments of a museum showing many objects for a limited period with a large religious monument in a permanent location, one can detect similar approaches at work. In the exhibition in Paris, vitrines displayed collections of smaller objects, with medieval tapestries mounted above

<sup>45</sup> *Les Trésors des églises de France* (Paris: Musée des Arts Décoratifs, 1965), 289–94. Discussed by Michele Tomasi, “Tutela e conoscenza: *Les Trésors des églises de France*: Parigi, Musée des Arts décoratifs, 1965,” in *Medioevo/Medioevi: Un secolo di esposizioni d'arte medievale*, ed. Enrico Castelnuovo and Alessio Monciatti (Pisa: Edizione della Normale, 2008), 313–30.



**Fig. 9.11:** Exhibition view of *Les Trésors des églises de France*, Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, 1965 showing the Virgin and Child sculpture from the Church of Saint-Mathieu, Morlaix. Photo: Ministère de la Culture, France.

them on the walls. Larger pieces, such as the enthroned Virgin and Child from the Church of Saint-Mathieu in Morlaix, were placed on pedestals in the middle of the galleries (Fig. 9.11). In the same vein, at Monestiés, Mainponte and Mastorakis curated the display in the chapel, literally staging it by lighting it like a film set, with spotlights on the stars. At a time when modernism dominated the cultural sphere, the parties tasked with presenting these monumental medieval statues did so using the techniques of their era and for an audience primed to respond to formalist aesthetics rather than to religious meaning. But who was the intended audience? Other authors in this volume address the issue of audience, but especially pertinent is Kevin Murphy's contribution about the reconstruction of Notre-Dame of Paris, describing how the restoration of religious monuments offered a chance to foreground national unity in challenging times. The political aspect of restoration is understandable with the capital city's iconic cathedral, but what about a sculpture in the provincial backwater of Monestiés? In such a remote location, this significant restoration program had a relatively limited public. The battle that Monestiés won soon after the war to keep the statues on-site rather than

lose them to Albi highlights an intense local pride in the region's religious medieval culture. Paris may as well have been a foreign country to the villagers of Monestiés.

## Conclusion: The Triumph of Tourism?

In the 1990s, the Monestiés sculptures underwent another significant intervention, which saw the Entombment, Pietà, and Crucifixion reunited in the same space, at the east end of the chapel of Saint-Jacques (see Fig. 9.1). The other major addition to the curation of the monument was the new identification of the figure at Christ's head in the Entombment ensemble. In the iconographic tradition, Joseph of Arimathea holds the shroud at Christ's head. The local art historians involved with the restoration program, Antoinette and Jacques Sangouard, identified the figure as the original patron of the monument, Louis d'Amboise (Fig. 9.12). This reidentification continues to be disputed by art historians, yet the statue is still touted both on-site and in the chapel's pro-



**Fig. 9.12:** Joseph of Arimathea (Louis d'Amboise?) from the Entombment sculptures; Chapel of Saint-Jacques, Monestiés. Photo: Author.

motional materials as representing Louis.<sup>46</sup> The naming of the statue—as the medieval prelate and powerful bishop of Albi—serves as an added attraction to persuade tourists to make the detour from Albi to this tiny village. It offers a good example of how a personal commemorative monument can evolve (and be shaped) into a *lieu de mémoire*.<sup>47</sup> The Sangouards' identification of Joseph of Arimathea as Louis d'Amboise can be regarded as an astute promotional strategy necessary for the village's ongoing prosperity. Consider, for example, the case study of the small village of Collonges, in Corrèze. In 1969, the village's mayor renamed the village Collonges-la-Rouge to distinguish it from six other villages with the same name. Then, in 1982, he founded the association and initiative Les Plus Beaux Villages de France (France's Most Beautiful Villages) and named Collonges-la-Rouge as its first recipient. This initiative and labelling system has proven hugely successful in bringing visitors from all over the world to villages that for centuries escaped the notice of all but their closest neighbors. There are now more than 190 Plus Beaux Villages; Monestiés received the accolade in 2001.

I have argued that the Entombment ensemble statues represent a compelling case study for how medieval artifacts were exploited physically and ideologically over several centuries by national and regional politicians, whose views and decisions were shaped by both personal and broader cultural agendas. The thread running through the various re-presentations and attempts to relocate the statues remains the determination of the actors closest to home: the villagers of Monestiés. Because of the effective collaboration of local historians, municipal representatives, and inhabitants, the latest presentation of the Entombment statues marks a new chapter in the political manipulation of the medieval statues, one with tourism and the threatened rural economy at its heart.

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<sup>46</sup> Jacques Dubois, "Les travaux de Louis d'Amboise," in *L'Art des frères d'Amboise: Les chapelles de l'hôtel de Cluny et du château de Gaillon*, ed. Agnès Bos and Thierry Crépin-Leblond (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 2007), 58–63, at 61.

<sup>47</sup> Pierre Nora, ed., *Les Lieux de mémoire*, 3 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1997); Pierre Nora, ed., *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, vol. 1, *Conflicts and Divisions*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Heinich, *La fabrique du patrimoine*, 19.

Savvas Mavromatidis and María Aimé Villano

# Late Medieval Cypriot Tombstones in the Colonial Period: Between the Protection of Medieval Cultural Heritage and its Political Instrumentalization

A focal point on the crossroads of the eastern Mediterranean, Cyprus has been the object of long-lasting territorial disputes with roots going back to the Middle Ages. Until the last quarter of the twelfth century, Cyprus was a Byzantine possession. In 1191, it was conquered by King Richard I (the Lionheart) during the Third Crusade, then sold to the Knights Templar before being transferred to the dispossessed king of Jerusalem, Guy of Lusignan, whose origins can be traced to the French region of Poitou. The Lusignan dynasty would dominate Cyprus for almost three hundred years until 1489, when the Venetians officially took control of the island. In their turn, the Ottomans conquered Cyprus in 1571 and ruled it until the Congress of Berlin in 1878, when the island was handed over to British administration. Formally annexed to Great Britain in 1914, Cyprus was declared a British Crown Colony in 1924 and gained independence only in 1960 after a turbulent period of revolts against the colonial presence between the 1930s and the 1950s.

This brief summary of successive foreign dominions over Cyprus between the Middle Ages and the modern era opens up a series of questions concerning the intersection of colonialism, power, legitimacy, and identity that bear upon the study of medieval Cypriot heritage. Consequently, our approach to the histories of Cypriot tomb sculpture is shaped by postcolonial discourse.<sup>1</sup> Using both edited and archival material, it is our goal to analyze, within the context of colonial policies in the Eastern Mediterranean, the role played by European intellectuals between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries in the recording, relocation, preservation, and museumization of tombstones from the Lusignan kingdom (Fig. 10.1).

Cyprus offers a privileged postcolonial case study because it saw colonial administration twice in its history: the first time under the Venetians and for a second, modern period, under British rule (although Cyprus was then also the target of French

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, François Pouillon, “Orientalism, Dead or Alive? A French History,” in *After Orientalism. Critical Perspectives on Western Agency and Eastern Re-appropriations*, ed. Pouillon and Jean-Claude Vatin (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 3–17, at 9–12.

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**Fig. 10.1:** Funerary slab of Simone de Gibelet in the Church of Our Lady Angeloktisti at Kiti (Larnaca). Photo: Eva Avril, GRAPH-EAST, 2021. Reproduced by kind permission of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus.

colonial aspirations). For Lusignan Cyprus, however, the label “colonial” is inappropriate. While it is true that the Franks constituted a socially and politically dominant class, they were indigenous to the island—most were born and spent their whole lives there—and were not dependent on any external authority. It is all the more significant, then, that the modern colonial powers would endeavor to buttress their legitimacy by evoking, among other things, the precolonial medieval heritage. British rule, the focus of our discussion, gave impetus to the protection of this heritage in the period between the First and Second World Wars. The British use of Cypriot heritage was directed against both local ethnic communities, who were indifferent to the medieval monuments, and against the efforts of other colonial powers, notably France and Italy, who criticized the cultural policy of Great Britain in order to consolidate their position on the island.

The modern assimilation of Cyprus to the West was studded with Orientalist elements, as can be seen, for example, in excavation photographs of Gothic monuments flanked by palm trees surrounded by men wearing turbans and traditional outfits (Fig. 10.2).



**Fig. 10.2:** Excavation in 1901 at the Franciscan convent in Nicosia. The slab is now kept in the Holy Cross Church in Nicosia. Photo: Camille Enlart © Ministry of Culture (France), Médiathèque du patrimoine et de la photographie, diffusion RMN-GP.

In the same vein, the islands' supposed decadence was blamed on the interference of "non-Western" ethnic groups (foremost the Greeks) or rival powers (such as the Venetians). Postcolonial historiography has highlighted how this process also downplayed and even suppressed the multi-layered nature of the island's society in the Middle Ages (while Greeks then constituted the majority of the population, other ethnic and religious groups exercised *de facto* political control). If Cyprus was part of the broad phenomenon of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Anglo-French Orientalism, it did not always comfortably fit ideas of exoticism or provide the haunted memories and landscapes generally at the core of Orientalism.<sup>2</sup> In fact, it could not do so—precisely because the colonialists emphasized the island's Western medieval past. That perspective also explains why scholarly and antiquarian efforts from the nineteenth into the

<sup>2</sup> Niki Sioki, "Posters of Cyprus: Promoting the Colony during the Interwar Period," in *Colonial Cyprus: A Cultural History*, ed. Maria Hadjiathanasiou, Andreas Karyos, and Emiliou Solomou (London: Bloomsbury, 2024).

twentieth centuries focused on the preservation and the museumization of Cypriot funerary monuments. As will be argued here, these actions that endeavored to save and valorize Cyprus's artistic patrimony were shaped both by the individual actions of certain scholars and by political goals defined from a Western colonial perspective.

## Growing Interest in Cypriot Funerary Art

The beginning of colonial interest in Cyprus's tombstones cannot be divorced from the ideological context and the broader cultural environment of the Victorian era in Britain and the Second Empire in France. In both countries, a growing number of intellectuals were engaged in the revalorization of medieval heritage. Britain's initial drive to take hold of Cyprus was fed, among other things, by the Romantic myth built around the crusading Richard I, who was believed to have been a courageous, courteous, and just sovereign. The "chivalric revival," which took place in the first half of the nineteenth century and saw Sir Walter Scott's literary works at its epicenter, played a major role in this process of creating influential historic models and historicizing images.<sup>3</sup>

The attention to tombstones can be related to the nostalgia nineteenth-century European scholars felt for the loss of equivalent medieval burial monuments in their own countries. Those had largely been destroyed during the previous centuries, whether in the aftermath of the Protestant Reformation, as casualties of French Revolutionary iconoclasm, or as the victims of Baroque and later redesigns.<sup>4</sup> The antiquarians at the heart of our analysis participated in the thriving field of antiquarian studies, which, since its foundations in the sixteenth century, had been devoted to genealogy, heraldry, and other aspects of the lives of people to whom these scholars felt emotionally connected in terms of ancestry and heritage.<sup>5</sup> But it was the development of archaeology (and anthropology) within the context of the European colonial enterprise that kindled nineteenth-century interest in ancient and medieval Cypriot monuments. They now entered the realm of archaeological expeditions as well as of competitions in historical writing organized by learned institutions such as the French Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres.

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3 Peter W. Edbury, *The Kingdom of Cyprus and the Crusades 1191–1374* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 11–12; Andrekos Varnava, *British Imperialism in Cyprus, 1878–1959: The Inconsequential Possession* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 45–47.

4 Philip Lindley, *Tomb Destruction and Scholarship: Medieval Monuments in Early Modern England* (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2007), 53–137.

5 Lindley, *Tomb Destruction*, 53–137; Robert Marcoux, "L'espace, le monument et l'image du mort au Moyen Âge: Une enquête anthropologique sur les tombeaux médiévaux de la Collection Gaignières" (PhD diss., University of Laval and University of Burgundy, 2013), 13–31.



France's interest in Cyprus was exacerbated by the religious uncertainty in which the Christian population of the eastern Mediterranean lived; that modern political dimension was projected onto the history of the Crusader states. The study of the Crusades was well established by the nineteenth century, but Louis de Mas Latrie (1815–97) stands out. Although he went to Cyprus only once, in late 1845 as part of a more extended journey to territories that once made up the Latin East, he nourished a long-lasting interest in the island focused on geography, archaeology, and epigraphy. During fieldwork carried out during his stay, Mas Latrie met Marcello Cerruti, the consular secretary to Cyprus for King Charles Albert of Sardinia from the House of Savoy. As early as 1845, this Genoese functionary recorded in a manuscript some French inscriptions found on local tombstones (mainly from Nicosia), accompanying them with a series of drawings. His booklet represented the very first attempt to collect the traces of a heritage that was, in his words, at risk of being destroyed.<sup>6</sup> Yet Cerruti showed little interest in the Venetian or Genoese tombstones; his attention was monopolized by funerary monuments with French inscriptions, perhaps because of his friendship with Mas Latrie.

Cyprus's medieval past also attracted the attention of the French who lived on, or traveled to, the island. An example is the so-called Phoenician expedition in 1860–61. This French field trip to the eastern Mediterranean aimed to uncover the Phoenician heritage and culminated with the discovery of the large Amathus stone vase, now in the Louvre.<sup>7</sup> Along with ancient finds, some of the earliest medieval Cypriot tombstones, discovered in a cemetery near Limassol, were also transported to France, where they are still housed in Paris's Musée de Cluny (Fig. 10.3).

The decision to include Cyprus in the original program of the expedition was due to a young French archeologist, Sosthène Grasset, who was living there and who wanted to ensure that France would collect these hitherto unknown funerary slabs. Therefore, he brought them to the attention of Baron Emmanuel Guillaume-Rey, a prominent French Orientalist and archaeologist of the Crusades who was then editing and updating the book on the families of Outremer that the pioneering seventeenth-century historian Du Cange had left unfinished. A few decades later, the art historian, archaeologist, and collector Camille Enlart (1862–1927) mounted another mission to Cyprus. His publication of 1899, *L'art gothique et la Renaissance en Chypre* (Gothic art and the Renaissance in Cyprus), aimed to show the influence of French Gothic art abroad.<sup>8</sup> In it, Enlart also reported that, according to some villagers, several slabs had been removed from a church near Limassol in order to be sold to a Frenchman inter-

<sup>6</sup> Piacenza, Biblioteca Comunale Passerini-Landi, Ms. Com. 14, fols. 4r–5v. María Villano is preparing an edition of this unpublished manuscript.

<sup>7</sup> Inv. AO 22897.

<sup>8</sup> See also Camille Enlart, *Les monuments des croisés dans le royaume de Jérusalem: Architecture religieuse et civile*, 2 vols. (Paris: Genthner, 1925–28).



**Fig. 10.3:** Funerary slabs of Ourri de Brie and Jacques de Sur, transported to France in 1866–67 and now in the Musée de Cluny in Paris. Photo: Camille Enlart © Ministry of Culture (France), Médiathèque du patrimoine et de la photographie, diffusion RMN-GP.

ested in their inscriptions. He believed that these were the tombstones that had been discovered in 1865 and transported to the Louvre in the following years.<sup>9</sup>

French archaeological expeditions in Cyprus were facilitated by the presence of fellow countrymen who served as consuls and by a thriving community of compatriots. Edmond-Clément-Marie Duthoit (1837–89) was an architect and disciple of Viollet-le-Duc who went in May 1865 to Cyprus to organize the removal of the Amathus vase. From his correspondence, we learn how Western European intellectuals viewed the Turkish and Greek inhabitants of Cyprus in the nineteenth-century colonial context, since he bluntly accused them of degrading the island's "Latin" character.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Mas Latrie condemned the fanaticism and administrative incapacity of the Ottomans, encouraging them to leave if they could not abide by the principles of fair-

<sup>9</sup> Camille Enlart, *L'art gothique et la Renaissance en Chypre* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1899), 2:454–56; Louis de Mas Latrie, *L'île de Chypre, sa situation présente et ses souvenirs du moyen âge* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1879), 390n1.

<sup>10</sup> Jacques Foucart-Borville, "La correspondance chypriote d'Edmond Duthoit (1862 et 1865)," *Cahiers du Centre d'Études Chypriotes* 4 (1985): 3–60, at 23, 44, 53 (hereafter cited as CCEC); Enlart, *L'art gothique*, 2:487.

ness that the British had (supposedly) introduced.<sup>11</sup> Nicolas Iorga, a Romanian historian studying in Paris (where, in 1896, he wrote a thesis on Philippe de Mézières, a crusading soldier who became chancellor to Peter of Lusignan), considered Cyprus as a continuation of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, while several of his publications recalled how the Crusades were a larger French-initiated enterprise.<sup>12</sup> By placing Cyprus firmly within their nation's sphere of cultural influence, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century French narratives claimed the right to take care of the island's cultural heritage, even if it had come under British administration.

The supposed links between the Crusades and modern France had emerged in the wake of Napoleon's Egyptian campaign. Furthermore, from the 1830s onward, the romantic image of Cyprus as a medieval kingdom located in the "exotic" eastern Mediterranean under Lusignan rule served France's colonial policy well.<sup>13</sup> Since the French and English were competing for control of the entire region in the context of a decaying Ottoman Empire, Mas Latrie's work contributed to the French cause, laying claim to Cyprus's crusader past for the benefit of his nation. After the Congress of Berlin in 1878, which gave the island to the British, a different trope was introduced to rationalize European dominance in the Middle East: that of virtuous rulers committed to educating local communities against the injustices committed by previous, non-European (meaning Ottoman) oppressors.<sup>14</sup> Claude Conder, a lieutenant colonel, explorer, antiquarian, and surveyor for the Palestine Exploration Fund in the 1870s, claimed in his history of the region under Frankish rule that "the kingdom of Jerusalem was the model of just and moderate rule, such as we boast to have given to India, under somewhat similar conditions."<sup>15</sup> Mas Latrie seems to have shared this opinion; even if he regretted that Cyprus was not under French control, he did not hesitate to note the beneficial effects of the political integration of the island into a European, Christian, liberal, and just state. Western Orientalist imagery was equally entrenched in European representations of Cyprus. The exotic element is pervasive in Duthoit's correspondence, but it also crops up in Enlart's scientific work. Much like the excavation photograph (see Fig. 10.2), his panoramic drawings of medieval Cypriot monuments feature, ostensibly for scale, "exotic" vegetation and human figures.<sup>16</sup>

Mas Latrie likewise stressed the French character of Lusignan Cyprus. It was only in 1879, one year after Cyprus was ceded to Great Britain, that he used the material he

<sup>11</sup> Mas Latrie, *L'île de Chypre*, 81–82, 112–15.

<sup>12</sup> Nicolas Iorga, *France de Chypre* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1931), 29; Iorga, *La France de Terre Sainte: Considérations synthétiques* (Bucharest: Datina Românească, 1934), 100.

<sup>13</sup> Angel Nicolaou-Konnari, "La France de Chypre" de Louis de Mas Latrie," *CCEC* 43 (2013): 505–21, at 507.

<sup>14</sup> Nicolaou-Konnari, "La France de Chypre," 517.

<sup>15</sup> Claude R. Conder, *The Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, 1099 to 1291 A.D.* (London: Committee of the Palestine Exploration Fund, 1897), 427–28.

<sup>16</sup> Lucie Bonato, "Chypre, Cyprus, Zypern, Cipro, Cyprien, Κύπρος . . . : Les voyageurs européens à Chypre au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle," *CCEC* 42 (2012): 25–86, at 75–76.

had collected across the island for the publication of his most important work, *L'île de Chypre, sa situation présente et ses souvenirs du moyen âge* (The island of Cyprus: its present situation and its medieval traces). Although this author claimed that the French expeditions to the island were motivated by purely scientific purposes, a certain bias is nonetheless evident in his discussion. Several features make that clear. One is the exclusive focus on the Lusignan kingdom, which he assimilated into the French past. Another is the selective use of material related to the Venetians. For example, Mas Latrie published documents that feature the complaints of the last queen of Cyprus, Caterina Cornaro (1454–1510), about the interference of Venetian officers in the kingdom, thus indirectly blaming the Italians for its decline. In another work, published a few years before the annexation of Savoy by France in 1860, Mas Latrie reproduced documents about the relations between Savoy and Cyprus (through the marriages of Anne of Cyprus and Queen Charlotte of Cyprus), which led him to conclude that the rights of the House of Savoy over Cyprus were better established than those of other claimants.<sup>17</sup> Finally, he also discarded the one source that would have provided a key Greek Cypriot perspective about the Lusignan period: the *Chronicle* by Leontios Makhairas written in the early fifteenth century. In short, the French historian tried to exalt the Frankish achievements and monuments by, on the one hand, diminishing the intellectual and artistic contributions of the Greeks and, on the other, by depicting the Venetian era as a period of decline.

That Mas Latrie did not read Greek further hampered a more accurate historical picture of Cypriot culture; as did the fact that there were fewer sources for the Venetian period than for the Frankish kingdom.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, Mas Latrie neglected Latin funerary inscriptions that referred to individuals originating from Venice and other late medieval Italian city-states because they did not fit the nationalistic narrative he wanted to create. He did the same with inscriptions in Greek, knowing that they, too, would reveal a mixture of different communities in Lusignan society. Since French was the linguistic pivot of Orientalists' interest, it was important to underline the difference between the Cypriot kingdom and the other Crusader states. Although the language used by the ruling class in all these territories was essentially French, from the fourteenth century onward the social dynamics existing in Cyprus favored a progressive mixing of the French-speaking element with the Italian- and Greek-speaking

17 Louis de Mas Latrie, *Histoire de l'île de Chypre sous le règne des princes de la maison de Lusignan* (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1852–55), 2:viii, 3:iv, 151–52, 557–89. The efforts of the House of Savoy to restore Latin rule in Cyprus continued until the first half of the eighteenth century, as documented in Turin, Archivio di Stato di Torino, Sezione Corte, Scritture riguardanti il Regno di Cipro, il Principato d'Acaia, il viaggio di Levante in Materie politiche per rapporto all'interno [Inventario n. 107], Regno di Cipro, Mazzo 1, 2, 3 and Mazzo 1 d'addizione.

18 Nicolaou-Konnari, "La France de Chypre," 511–18; Benjamin Arbel, "Entre mythe et histoire: La légende noire de la domination vénitienne à Chypre," *Études balkaniques* 5 (1998): 81–107, at 83–85, 106–7.

ones.<sup>19</sup> The multilingual character of Cypriot society is confirmed by tombstone inscriptions, such as the slab of a knight (likely from the House de Verny, d. 1337) in French (Fig. 10.4a), the slab of Jacques Urry (d. 1457) in Latin (Fig. 10.4b), and finally, the slab of Akyline Flangis (d. 1556) in Greek (Fig. 10.4c).



**Fig. 10.4a:** Funerary slab of a knight (detail). Limassol, Cyprus Medieval Museum. Photo: Eva Avril, GRAPH-EAST, 2021. Reproduced by kind permission of the Department of Antiquities, Republic of Cyprus.



**Fig. 10.4b:** Funerary slab of Jacques Urry (detail). Limassol, Cyprus Medieval Museum. Photo: Eva Avril, GRAPH-EAST, 2021. Reproduced by kind permission of the Department of Antiquities, Republic of Cyprus.



**Fig. 10.4c:** Funerary slab of Akyline Flangis (detail). Limassol, Cyprus Medieval Museum. Photo: Eva Avril, GRAPH-EAST, 2021. Reproduced by kind permission of the Department of Antiquities, Republic of Cyprus.

If Mas Latrie's biases contributed to the falsification of Cyprus's medieval history, the same can be said about Greek historians who adopted the same historiographic stance, except that it was the Franks of the medieval period who were the target of their hostile attitude. Their accounts focused on the enslavement of the Greeks by the foreigners who had taken over the island, thereby assimilating the rule of medieval Franks and Venetians to the modern British empire.

<sup>19</sup> Evangelia Skoufari, *Cipro veneziana (1473–1571): Istituzioni e culture nel regno della Serenissima* (Rome: Viella, 2011), 148–59.

## The Legislative Framework for Antiquities in Cyprus and the Birth of Museums in the British Period

As early as 1845, Marcello Cerruti drew attention to the unscrupulous management of funerary monuments current in his time. Foreign diplomats seem to have been especially at fault and Cerruti reported that a group formed by two consuls, a chancellor, and some merchants had shattered medieval slabs in search of hoped-for treasures. He provided another interesting detail that might shed some light on the formation of a legislative framework for antiquities found on Cyprus. After a series of misfortunes, including the uncontrolled reuse and unauthorized transportation of medieval tombstones, Cerruti prompted the Turkish ruler, Hassan Pasha, to write a notice forbidding the reemployment of stones with inscriptions or sculpted carvings in construction projects across the island.<sup>20</sup>

On an official level, until 1869 the management of cultural heritage was regulated by imperial *firman*s (permits) granted to private individuals. Gradually, the Ottomans developed more comprehensive regulations for the protection of antiquities. These culminated in the Antiquities Law of 1874, which was expressly designed to retain finds made in the Ottoman Empire during archaeological and artistic discoveries. Although the British nominally followed this law once they took control over Cyprus, they never adequately implemented it. For example, when the Cyprus Museum was established in 1882, it benefited only minimally from previous excavations because of the still prevalent and widespread practice of private digs. Only with the mandate of Sir Henry Ernest Gascoyne Bulwer, the British High Commissioner to Cyprus between 1886 and 1892, did a shift occur. As the ex officio chairman of the Museum Commission, Bulwer decided in 1887 to restrict excavation permits only to scientific institutions.

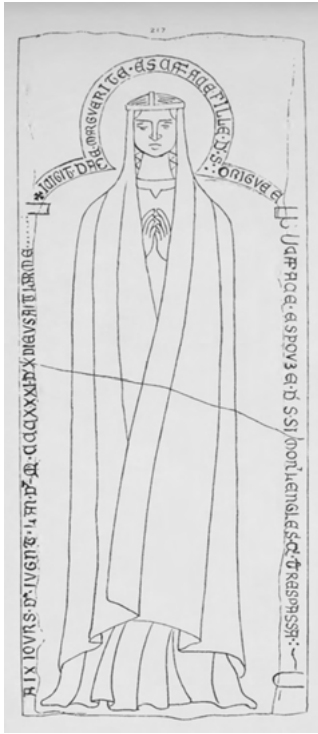
Bulwer also provided a significant contribution to the study, revalorization, and political use of the tombstones to promote the British agenda in the early days of their rule in Cyprus. In 1887, he and his private secretary, James Tankerville Chamberlayne, visited the Omerghie Mosque (formerly an Augustinian monastery) in Nicosia.<sup>21</sup> After seeing the many inscriptions on tombstones embedded in the floor, the governor urged his secretary to transcribe some of them. Chamberlayne then contacted Mas Latrie, who encouraged him to systematically record inscriptions found within Nicosian churches, aware of the difficulties that relocating them to a safer and more suitable place for display would involve.<sup>22</sup> In 1894, Chamberlayne, a trained soldier who in those years served as a police commander in Cyprus, published *Lacrimae Nicossiensens*

<sup>20</sup> Piacenza, Biblioteca Comunale Passerini-Landi, Ms. Com. 14., fols. 61v, 62v.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Kiely and Robert S. Merrill, "Tankerville James Chamberlayne: A Singular Pioneer in the Revealing of Cyprus' Past," *CCEC* 51 (2021): 183–221.

<sup>22</sup> Chamberlayne, Letter to Mas Latrie, 26 June 1888, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms. NAF 24165, fol. 80r.

(Nicosian tears), the first volume of which was entirely devoted to medieval tombstones found in that city.<sup>23</sup> The project was not limited to collecting and transcribing funerary inscriptions since Chamberlayne also integrated information about the Frankish families mentioned on the slabs. Written in French, published in Paris, and dedicated to Mas Latrie, *Lacrimae Nicossiensēs*'s intended primary audience clearly was not British, even if French was a well-known language among members of the cultural elite. It is notable that the slabs were treated with striking accuracy thanks to a large number of detailed drawings made by W. Williams, District Engineer of Cyprus. His illustration of the 1331 slab of Marguerite d'Escaface is much more precise than the ones Cerruti and Mas Latrie provided in their works (Fig. 10.5a–d).



**Fig. 10.5a:** W. Williams, Drawing of the funerary slab of Marguerite d'Escaface. Photo from Chamberlayne, *Lacrimae Nicossiensēs*, 1894.

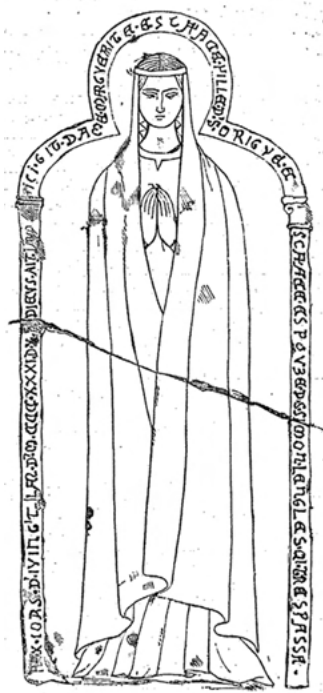


**Fig. 10.5b:** Funerary slab of Marguerite d'Escaface. Larnaca, Larnaca Castle. Photo: Eva Avril, GRAPH-EAST, 2021. Reproduced by kind permission of the Department of Antiquities, Republic of Cyprus.

<sup>23</sup> Tankerville J. Chamberlayne, *Lacrimae Nicossiensēs: Recueil d'inscriptions funéraires, la plupart françaises existant encore dans l'île de Chypre* (Paris: Quantin, 1894). Although a second volume was planned, it never appeared.



**Fig. 10.5c:** Marcello Cerruti, Drawing of the funerary slab of Marguerite d'Escaface. Piacenza, Biblioteca Comunale Passerini-Landi, Ms. Com. 14, fol. 30f, foglio 5, n°7. Photo: Piacenza, Biblioteca Comunale Passerini-Landi.



**Fig. 10.5d:** Louis de Mas Latrie, Drawing of the funerary slab of Marguerite d'Escaface. Photo from "Monuments français de l'île de Chypre," *Le magasin pittoresque* 15 (1847).

Along with the transcriptions and the references to heraldry, Chamberlayne gave the precise location of each stone he had identified in churches and mosques. There is no question that his book was the most important publication on Cypriot funerary monuments at the time. Not only did it draw public attention to the island's medieval remains but it also reinforced the interpretive model that gave Cyprus a firm place in Western history. The tombstones described in its pages revealed to a general readership evidence of specific ruling families associated with the Crusades, European history in the late Middle Ages, and, in particular, the expansion of Westerners into the East during this period. At the same time, the work advanced the connection between heraldry, genealogy, and funerary monuments. Although this was the norm for nine-



teenth-century antiquarians, the combination of these evidentiary strands still earned Chamberlayne the label “the Genealogist.”<sup>24</sup>

Chamberlayne’s work is important in other respects too. Although the British held the same generally negative view about Cypriots as did other Westerners, *Lacrimae Nicossiensis* made extensive reference to the kindness of the local population and the assistance Greek, Turkish, and Armenian laypeople and government officials had provided. In particular, Chamberlayne mentioned the help of religious authorities who were in charge of the churches and mosques in which the tombstones were found. Even more important, he supported the decisions taken under Bulwer’s mandate for the preservation of ancient monuments, though he recognized their limits (and it would take until 1905 for the first Antiquities Law of the colonial era to be enacted by the British).<sup>25</sup> According to this law, “antiquities” deserving protection were defined as all works from prehistoric times until the conquest of the island by the Ottomans in 1571. The law therefore extended to any monument related to the medieval tombstones, whether it was a full architectural memorial or sculpted stone that originally belonged to such a memorial, a tomb, or an inscription.<sup>26</sup> Despite providing a framework for the protection of ancient monuments, Gothic cathedrals, and other medieval Latin churches (which had been converted into mosques), such matters remained under the control of the Muslim Council of Turkish Commissioners for Charitable and Religious Purposes (Evcaf) or the Greek Orthodox bishop.<sup>27</sup>

Chamberlayne also stands out from other amateur scholars and archaeologists of the period in that his work always remained within the bounds of legality. As with everyone else involved in the discovery of antiquities, he did have his own collection and traded in objects. But the list of items in his possession during his stay in Kyrenia in 1906, which he had to submit to authorities in accordance with the requirements of

24 Despina Pilides, *George Jeffery: His Diaries and the Ancient Monuments of Cyprus* (Nicosia: Department of Antiquities, Ministry of Communications and Works, 2009), 2: 595; Georges Jeffery, *A Description of the Historic Monuments of Cyprus* (Nicosia: Government Printing Office, 1918), 437.

25 Chamberlayne, *Lacrimae Nicossiensis*, 7–8.

26 For the Antiquities Law of 1905, see Supplement to *The Cyprus Gazette* no. 865, 19 May 1905, 5626–36, clauses 1.2 (2–4), 3.28. The next Antiquities Law, promulgated in 1935, broadened the definition of antiquities to include objects produced before 1700 C.E. See “A Law to Consolidate and Amend the Law Relating to Antiquities,” Supplement no. 1 to *The Cyprus Gazette* no. 2441, 10 May 1935, 315–30, at 315, clause 2.

27 One these issues, see Nicholas Stanley-Price, “The Ottoman Law on Antiquities (1874) and the Founding of the Cyprus Museum,” in *Cyprus in the 19th Century A.D: Fact, Fancy and Fiction*, ed. Veronica Tatton-Brown (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2001), 267–75; Charlotte M. Roueché, “The Prehistory of the Cyprus Department of Antiquities,” *British School at Athens Studies* 8 (2001): 155–66; Polina Nicolaou, “The Diaspora of Cypriot Antiquities and the British Museum (1860–1900)” (PhD diss., University of Exeter, 2013), 114–43, 303–8; Robert S. Merrillees and Thomas Kiely, “The Archaeological Interests of Samuel Brown, Government Engineer, and his Circle of Acquaintances in Late 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Cyprus,” *CCEC* 42 (2012): 245–72; Anja Ulbrich and Thomas Kiely, “Britain and the Archaeology of Cyprus: I: The Long 19th Century,” *CCEC* 42 (2012): 305–56.

the 1905 Antiquities Law, reveals that Chamberlayne's aim was mainly to describe and preserve the objects, not to accumulate them as collectibles.<sup>28</sup> Also in contrast to many of his contemporaries, he seems to have had a sincere academic interest in the history and art of Cyprus.<sup>29</sup> In that, he is comparable to the English architect George Jeffery, trained in the tradition of John Ruskin and an active member of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) founded in 1877. Between 1908 and 1935, Jeffery served as the Curator of Ancient Monuments of Cyprus. As early as 1901, he expressed the hope that the huge body of medieval fragments that Chamberlayne had collected could form the core of a museum.<sup>30</sup> The project was eventually completed in 1928 in a building near the Cathedral of St. Sophia in Nicosia, which came to be known as the Lapidary Museum (Fig. 10.6).<sup>31</sup>



Fig. 10.6: Nicosia, Lapidary Museum in 2019. Photo: Marco Simoni.

<sup>28</sup> Kiely and Merrillees, "Tankerville James Chamberlayne," 196–97.

<sup>29</sup> Kiely and Merrillees, "Tankerville James Chamberlayne," 197–99, 210–11.

<sup>30</sup> Pilides, *George Jeffery*, 672.

<sup>31</sup> Pilides, *George Jeffery*, 38, 674.

Chamberlayne's commitment to the systematic study of tombstones was directly linked to the lack of a place for their preservation and display.<sup>32</sup> After the publication of his work, he seems to have taken advantage of his authority by using fragments of tombstones for the decoration of a chapel dedicated to St. Elizabeth of Hungary that he had founded in 1907 as a private oratory in Kyrenia (Fig. 10.7).<sup>33</sup>



**Fig. 10.7:** Kyrenia, St. Elizabeth Chapel in 2019, with the slabs from Chamberlayne's collection embedded in the walls. Photo: Marco Simoni.

The decision to expose the slabs on the walls rather than have them carpet the floor shows Chamberlayne's intention to portray himself as one of the custodians of the endangered Cypriot medieval heritage: the tombs were now displayed in a manner that at once helped their preservation and study. One might also describe the chapel and its collection of slabs as attempts both to promote archaeology in Cyprus and to

<sup>32</sup> Chamberlayne to the Chief Secretary, 1 May 1905, Nicosia, Cyprus State Archives (hereafter cited as CSA), SA1/1660/1905, 1–2.

<sup>33</sup> Michalis Olympios, "Institutional Identities in Late Medieval Cyprus: The Case of Nicosia Cathedral," in *Identity/Identities in Late Medieval Cyprus*, ed. Tassos Papacostas and Guillaume Saint-Guillain (Nicosia: Cyprus Research Centre and King's College London Centre for Hellenic Studies, 2014), 195–240, at 218n87.

suggest ways of displaying medieval material as an encouragement to others to create spaces for its preservation.<sup>34</sup> Similar exhibitions—of slabs affixed to walls in locales created for them—prove that Chamberlayne’s example was followed by later curators (Fig. 10.8).



**Fig. 10.8:** Slab with commemorative inscription embedded in the wall of the yard of the Lapidary Museum, Nicosia; 2019. Photo: Marco Simoni.

As we move to consider museums, a more general question needs to be addressed: How did such institutions intersect with colonial discourses concerning the instruction of the local people or with the cultural and political desire to prevent the export of objects? The British held that establishing museums would have a positive influence on the education of the indigenous population and on the formation of their taste. Moreover, given the island’s riches in antiquities, they would promote Cyprus’s history and attract foreign scholars and institutional interest.<sup>35</sup> If the British decided against transferring the funerary monuments to English museum collections, it is be-

<sup>34</sup> For similar actions by the British in Palestine, see Inbal Ben-Asher Gitler and Bar Leshem, “Creating Museum Culture in Mandate Palestine,” *Israel Studies* 26, no. 3 (2021): 138–57, at 151–52.

<sup>35</sup> Nicolaou, “The Diaspora,” 133–36; Roueché, “Prehistory,” 158–64; Gitler and Leshem, “Creating Museum Culture.”

cause they already contained sufficient examples of this category of medieval art and because it was impossible to establish, via the inscriptions, connections to the English past (in contrast to what the French had managed to do earlier in the nineteenth century). Furthermore, for the British Museum, Cypriot antiquities were considered worth collecting only to the extent that they could provide answers to the “Mycenaean question,” a then highly debated issue in archaeological circles concerned with the extent of that civilization’s spatial and temporal boundaries.<sup>36</sup> For the British, ancient artifacts mattered more than medieval and Ottoman art, which could remain in situ and still be studied scientifically.

The actual removal of tombstones and other stone artifacts from the medieval churches of Nicosia to become part of future museums began only in the early twentieth century. Although the Bedestan (formerly the Church of Our Lady of Hodegetria) was used as an interim storage facility, the quantity of material was such that alternative sites had to be found. George Hill, Director of the British Museum, considered the house of the dragoman (interpreter) Hadjigeorkakis Kornesios, known as the Piki House, to be more suitable than the Bedestan.<sup>37</sup> Yet in the early 1930s, it was decided to remove the tombstones from the floor of St. Sophia of Nicosia and those that had been already transferred to the Bedestan from other places, such as the Lapidary Museum or the Kasteliotissa medieval vaulted hall.<sup>38</sup> Under the 1935 Antiquities Law, however, the newly established Department of Antiquities had to appeal to the Muslim community for approval of any activity related to tombstones that covered the floors of mosques. The removal of the tombstones from their original setting, the search for a suitable place to exhibit them, and the need to obtain approval from the Muslim authorities were neither easy nor exhaustive operations, which explains why the slabs in the Omerghie Mosque were transported to the Bedestan only in 1935.<sup>39</sup> But colonial documents indicate that, while some funerary slabs were removed from St. Sophia, this was not done on a regular basis. This is proven by the fact that, even as late as 1948, A.H.S. Megaw, then in charge of the Department of Antiquities, addressed a request to the Evcaf for permission to remove the tombstones.<sup>40</sup>

The politically explosive 1950s, marked by ongoing tensions between the British and Greek Cypriots, saw more intensive activities aimed at rescuing and preserving the Cypriot tombstones. It was during these years that most of the slabs were moved

36 Nicolaou, “The Diaspora,” 274–79.

37 Sir George Hill, “Report on the Conditions of Antiquities in Cyprus,” CSA, ANTQ1/39.

38 Brunehilde Imhaus, *Lacrimae Chypriae*, ed. Imhaus, vol. 1, *Catalogue et planches photographiques* (Nicosia: Département des Antiquités, 2004), plates nos. 158–212. The majority of the tombstones are currently preserved in the Cyprus Medieval Museum in Limassol.

39 Document of 23 April 1935 by the Colonial Secretary, CSA, ANTQ1/39; Rupert Gunnis, Personal Diary, 29–31 January 1935, 4–10 February 1935, Leeds, Henry Moore Institute Archive (hereafter cited as HMIA), 2011.0218/B, Box 19.

40 Brunehilde Imhaus, “Présentation du Matériel,” in Imhaus, *Lacrimae*, vol. 2, *Études et commentaire: Planches des dessins* (Nicosia: Département des Antiquités, 2004), 25–45, at 34.



from mosques to the Bedestan. Due to the unsuitability of this site for such fragile material, a separate building was erected, named the Gravestones Museum.<sup>41</sup> After independence in 1960, Cypriot museum authorities were once more engaged in the delicate task of moving these and other tombstones to more secure locations: the Cyprus Medieval Museum in Limassol and the Larnaca Castle. To conclude, one can say that the birth of Cypriot museums for the preservation and display of medieval funerary slabs was made possible thanks to individual initiatives and to a shifting legal frame that tried to keep up with its time. A sometimes uneasy mix of a new general sensibility toward medieval heritage combined with colonial propaganda led to a troubled and never entirely resolved institutional organization of the Cypriot medieval heritage.

## Colonial Rivalries and the Shifting Attitude of the British toward Cyprus's Medieval Cultural Heritage

Andrekos Varnava has recently coined the expression “inconsequential possession” to refer to the era of British rule in Cyprus.<sup>42</sup> He argues that the initial imperialist interests quickly declined to the point that the island became a burden for British foreign policy. But even if the political and strategic importance of Cyprus as a colony was diminishing, support for local heritage preservation improved as a result of growing calls for the protection of buildings and artworks around the world. Yet in the context of power relations in the eastern Mediterranean between 1878 and 1960, archaeology also became increasingly politicized as a nonmilitary outlet for rivalries between the great powers.<sup>43</sup>

During the first phase of British domination, until the 1891 implementation of the Famagusta Stones Act banning the removal of stones from the old town's ruined buildings, the Gothic abbey of Bellapais was used as a firing range by British troops. Likewise, a number of buildings in Famagusta were used as quarries for Port Said, the city founded in 1859 to serve as entry point to the Suez Canal. Chamberlayne condemned these kinds of abusive removals. He blamed modern culture, botched restorations by the numerous archaeological societies founded during the nineteenth century, the ways in which Western countries attempted to “protect” cultural heritage, and the carelessness of modern Cypriots toward those medieval monuments that did not belong to

<sup>41</sup> Imhaus, *Lacrimae*, 1:82.

<sup>42</sup> Varnava, *British Imperialism*, 3.

<sup>43</sup> Christopher Entwistle, “‘Lay not up for Yourselves Treasures upon Earth’: The British Museum and the Second Cyprus Treasure,” in *Through a Glass Brightly: Studies in Byzantine and Medieval Art and Archaeology presented to David Buckton*, ed. Entwistle (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2003), 226–36, at 232–33; Ulbrich and Kiely, “Britain and the Archaeology,” 334.

their faith.<sup>44</sup> Enlart's aforementioned book on Gothic art and Cyprus reinforced the idea that the Gothic monuments were part of the national French heritage. That very "annexation" gave ammunition to international protests about the failure of the British colonial administration to protect them.<sup>45</sup> It bears stressing that while European powers competed with each other, scholars cooperated across borders to save monuments and antiquities, whether in Europe or the Middle East. Even before the arrival of the British, a friendly network existed between Cerruti, Mas Latrie, and Chamberlayne; later, one developed between Chamberlayne, Enlart, and Jeffery. Such networks prove that political and strategic agendas did not always overlap with intellectual pursuits.

A first shift in colonial cultural policy regarding Gothic and Renaissance heritage took place between 1908 and 1935. Because of the pressure exerted by France and its interests in the area as well as Italy's growing imperial ambitions in the Aegean region, George Jeffery included the Venetian-era legacy in his efforts to preserve the Cypriot medieval patrimony.<sup>46</sup> The deficiencies in colonial cultural management were apparent to all.<sup>47</sup> As early as 1904, the High Commissioner to Cyprus, Sir William Heynes Smith (1898–1904), timidly expressed his desire to engage voluntary societies in Britain to support Cypriot heritage preservation. British newspapers, however, continued to criticize the general negligence and the destructive practices followed until the mid-1930s by the colonial administration, pointing out the lack of adequate resources for the protection of the island's cultural heritage.<sup>48</sup> Over time, France's archaeological campaigns and numerous publications regarding Cypriot history, as well as the successes encountered by the Italian regime in managing the cultural heritage of the Knights Hospitallers in Rhodes, prompted the British to take more effective measures.

Thus, the new secretary of state for the Colonies, William Ormsby-Gore, wrote in June 1936 to Sir Herbert Richmond Palmer, Governor of Cyprus, insisting on the need for the local government to support the director of antiquities. His argument was eloquent: "We must show that we are not less civilized or progressive in this sphere than the French and the Italians. Recent events have brought home to us acutely the need for upholding our prestige in the Mediterranean against the Italians."<sup>49</sup> Documents pre-

<sup>44</sup> Chamberlayne, *Lacrimae Nicossienses*, 4–5.

<sup>45</sup> Frank C. Sharp, "Exporting the Revolution: The Work of the SPAB outside Britain 1878–1914," in *From William Morris: Building Conservation and the Arts and Crafts Cult of Authenticity, 1877–1939*, ed. Chris Miele (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2005), 187–212, at 204. For a comparable British neglect of cultural heritage in Malta during the nineteenth century, see Astrid Swenson, "Crusader Heritages and Imperial Preservation," *Past and Present* 226, suppl. 10 (2015): 27–56, at 31–39.

<sup>46</sup> Swenson, "Crusader Heritages," 40–41; Ilia Xypolia, "From *Mare Nostrum* to *Insula Nostra*: British Colonial Cyprus and the Italian Imperial Threat," *The Round Table* 105 (2016): 287–96, at 288.

<sup>47</sup> As pointed out by Jeffery in letters to Thackeray Turner, 7 October 1900, 15 June 1901 and 21 October 1904, London, Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (hereafter cited as SPAB), "Cyprus."

<sup>48</sup> *Daily Express* 14 May 1934, quoted from Roueché, "Prehistory," 155–59.

<sup>49</sup> Quoted from Roueché, "Prehistory," 163. For the British concerns in eastern Mediterranean politics, with an emphasis on cultural heritage, see Nikolas Bakirtzis, "Fortifications as Urban Heritage:

served in the archive of Rupert Gunnis (1899–1965), who was both private secretary to the earlier governor of Cyprus, Sir Ronald Storrs, and Inspector of Antiquities for the Cyprus Museum from 1932 to 1936, make clear how the British followed the growing presence of Italy in the eastern Mediterranean with concern. Gunnis's museum position led him to form his own views about Italian cultural politics in Rhodes and beyond. In particular, seeing how the Italians were utilizing the restoration of Western artistic remains in the Dodecanese as a tool for legitimizing their presence there, he concluded that the British inertia vis-à-vis the Cypriot cultural heritage increased the potential for other colonial occupations.<sup>50</sup> With the start of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 and the strengthening of Francoist forces, Gunnis was moved to observe that "if Spain becomes a Fascist State, Italy and Spain would make England's position in the Mediterranean quite untenable."<sup>51</sup> In his eyes, it was imperative that Britain show a broader interest in its colonies beyond the military-strategic point of view, so that it could not be challenged by any rival in the changing European political circumstances of the interwar years.

By the 1930s, then, the conditions were right for the creation of a museum that could host the medieval tombstones of Cyprus in a way that fit the British narrative while demonstrating that the colonial administration did its job of heritage preservation. By developing a more hospitable environment for the funerary slabs, the British could present themselves as rescuers of Cyprus's medieval past and, therefore, solidify their presence on the island. In addition to intra-European political factors, the 1930s was also the time when the British tried to prevent the Greek Cypriots from pursuing their plans to seek a union with Greece. Promoting the tombstones as artifacts to be preserved, conserved, and exhibited showed to everyone how the British were custodians of the island's cultural heritage, as opposed to members of the Greek community who had spoken out against caring for the remnants of the island's medieval past.<sup>52</sup>

The archival evidence—mostly letters and diaries—shows that Gunnis was interested in the ancient heritage. Yet during the period in which he was inspector of antiquities for the Cyprus Museum, he closely supervised and authorized the intensive displacement of medieval tombstones from churches and mosques either to newly

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The Case of Nicosia in Cyprus and a Glance at the City of Rhodes," *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 62 (2017): 171–92; Bakirtzis, "From Fortification to Monument: The Walls of Nicosia," in *Hybrid Heritagescapes as Urban Commons in Mediterranean Cities: Accessing the Deep-Rooted Spatial Interfaces of Cities*, ed. Georgios Artopoulos (Nicosia: The Cyprus Institute, 2018), 29–36, at 34–36; Lawrence R. Pratt, *East of Malta, West of Suez: Britain's Mediterranean Crisis, 1936–39* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Xypolia, "From Mare Nostrum," 287–96.

<sup>50</sup> Samy Cavass to Gunnis, 19 July 1928, HMIA, "Correspondence from [Private] Samy Cavass to Rupert Gunnis," 2011.0218/A/5, Box 8.

<sup>51</sup> Rupert Gunnis, "Rupert's visit to Olympic Games in Berlin 1936," 8 August 1936, HMIA, "Account of the events at the Olympic Games, Berlin, Germany, August 1936. Written by Rupert Gunnis," 2011.0218/C, Box 13, 1–29, at 20.

<sup>52</sup> Georges Chacalli, *Cyprus under British Rule* (Nicosia: Phoni tis Kyprou, 1902), 152.



created museums or to storage facilities. His activities were not only consistent with the shift in British policy regarding Cypriot medieval heritage in the 1930s, but also with the emerging desire to turn the island into a Middle Eastern tourist resort that would be attractive to citizens of the Commonwealth.<sup>53</sup> His publications (some co-authored with the archaeologist Theophilus Mogabgab) were primarily aimed at promoting Cyprus abroad.<sup>54</sup> In the same promotional spirit, he never failed to take high-ranking visitors and tourists on a tour of the island's medieval monuments.<sup>55</sup> This kind of promotion was done in close cooperation with the senior British administration, both in Cyprus and abroad, through social events and exchange programs supporting Cypriot students.<sup>56</sup>

## Conclusion

The cultural narrative that flourished in the 1930s implied that the Greek and Turkish populations were responsible for the neglect of Cyprus's historic monuments; the British, by contrast, were presented as responsible, preservation-minded rulers. In other words, preservation was framed as a civilizing mission, one that contributed to legitimizing British rule in Cyprus. Local communities were accused of being interested only in art that corresponded to their own understanding of the island's history, an understanding that was perceived to be colored by ethnic identity. The British positioned themselves as guardians of the heritage these communities had neglected, and sometimes even destroyed: works dating to the Latin period of Cyprus.<sup>57</sup> The British, rather than engaging with contemporary Cypriot society as dynamic, depicted it as static and underdeveloped. This image emerges from newspaper articles and touristic posters as well as from private records, such as the Gunnis and Jeffery diaries. Ac-

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53 We thank Professor Niki Sioki (University of Nicosia) for information on the Empire Marketing Board's posters of the 1920s and 1930s; Sioki, "Posters of Cyprus."

54 Rupert Gunnis, *Historic Cyprus: A Guide to its Towns and Villages, Monasteries and Castles* (1936; repr., London: Orage, 2014); Gunnis and Theophilus Mogabgab, *Famagusta: A Short Guide for the Use of Visitors* (1934), rev. ed. (Nicosia: Government Printing Office, 1936). McCormick-Goodhart to Gunnis, 17 December 1936, HMIA, "Correspondence from [Leander] McCormick-Goodhart to Rupert Gunnis," 2011.0218/A/5, Box 8; Contract between Rupert Gunnis and Methuen & Co. Ltd, 5 December 1935, HMIA, "Correspondence from Peter Wait, W.W. Bate . . . , and E.V. Rieu of Methuen & Co Ltd Publishers to Rupert Gunnis," 2011.0218/A/5, Box 8.

55 Rupert Gunnis, Personal Diary, 29–31 January 1935, 4–10 October 1935, HMIA, 2011.0218/B, Box 19.

56 Extracts from the newspaper *Eleftheria*, 25 July 1928, 8 August 1928, and 29 August 1928, HMIA, "Correspondence from [Samuel] to Rupert Gunnis" and "Correspondence from Alexis [?] to Rupert Gunnis," 2011.0218/A/5, Box 8; Rupert Gunnis, Untitled article, 16 July 1927, HMIA, "Untitled article about Cyprus, written for the Italian magazine 'Sul Mare,'" 2011.0218/L, Box 13.

57 Bakirtzis, "From Fortification to Monument," 33; Bakirtzis, "Fortifications as Urban Heritage," 171–79, 180–81.

according to this argument, it was thanks only to the British presence that true social evolution was set in motion, a shift that linked the historical phases of the island to the protection of its heritage against the alleged stasis and indifference shown by the ethnic communities inhabiting it.<sup>58</sup>

As we have argued, the museumization of medieval funerary monuments removed from Cypriot churches and mosques was integral to that endeavor. This process also offers an excellent example of how knowledge about antiquities, including efforts for their preservation, was both the object of government regulations and the result of the successive, enlightened actions of specific individuals. Around the middle of the nineteenth century, when the French tried to gain a foothold in Cyprus, their interest in the wider eastern Mediterranean was conceived as a “civilizing mission” closely tied to hegemonic intentions that reached deep into the Ottoman Empire. Likewise, during the almost hundred-year-long British rule, medieval Cyprus was considered—by the British—to be a Western entity, just as French scholarship had done. Modern Cyprus, a former province of the Ottoman Empire, was, by contrast, presented as an uncivilized Other whose antiquities needed to be “saved” and whose inhabitants needed to be educated according to “progressive” European standards.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, although during this period Cyprus was cast as a model of good colonial governance, one that allowed colonialists to experiment with concepts such as citizenship, sovereignty, and participation, the liberal rhetoric was never transformed into real political equality between the foreign ruling class and the people they ruled.<sup>60</sup> This is why cultural interests did not always align with political ones.

Despite ongoing national rivalries, Italian and, especially, French and British antiquarians worked together in Cyprus and ended up creating similar accounts about medieval tombstones that minimized the non-Western archaeological evidence. A different picture could have emerged, one of a much more multicultural medieval Cypriot society. Nationalistic themes projected onto Cypriot medieval communities and their art say more about imperial cultural attitudes after the Congress of Berlin than they do about medieval society. Whereas the French dealt with the whole Cypriot affair through intellectual interventions, showing their interest in and connection to Cyprus and its history, the British openly engaged with the island’s medieval past only when facing a political threat in the region. In the twentieth century, we see the emer-

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58 Swenson, “Crusader Heritages,” 55–56. See also: Unknown sender to Gunnis, 20 November 1929, HMA, “Correspondence (incomplete) from unknown sender to Rupert Gunnis,” 2011.0218/A/5, Box 8.

59 David G. Hogarth et al., “Excavations in Cyprus, 1887–1888: Paphos, Leontari, Amargetti,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 9 (1888): 147–271; Margarita Díaz-Andreu García, *A World History of Nineteenth-Century Archaeology: Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 99–130.

60 Robert Hamilton Lang, *Cyprus: Its History, Its Present Resources and Future Prospects* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1878), 191–212, 270–72; David Scott, “Colonial Governmentality,” *Social Text* 43 (1995): 191–220; Maria Photiou, “Rethinking the History of Cypriot Art: Greek Cypriot Women Artists in Cyprus” (PhD diss., Loughborough University, 2013), 72–89.

gence, at first timidly and then, from the 1930s onward, in a more sustained and perhaps more aggressive manner, of a new narrative geared explicitly toward political objectives. As we have seen, this new narrative was attributable to the pressures that the British administration faced from home and abroad. The British commitment to cultural heritage can therefore be divided into two phases: a first linked to the activity of scholars and a second, in the 1930s, during which the colonial administration engaged in institutional reforms aiming to preserve Cypriot monuments. The rescue and museumization of medieval tombstones were part of this new British policy, one that used culture as a political weapon through which the colonizer could claim the role of mediator between the modern communities it ruled and the medieval past. In the end, whatever the intentions of political and intellectual actors, the result was that Cyprus's medieval funerary slabs were saved.



Andrew Sears

## A Failed Medievalism? The *Burgunderbeute* and Switzerland's Search for its Cultural Heritage



**Fig. 11.1:** View of the BHM from the Kirchenfeld Bridge, ca. 1927. Photo: ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, Bildarchiv, PK\_005791 (public domain).

In the summer of 1900, the Bern Historical Museum (BHM) was finally complete, a project that began almost seventy years earlier, when the city's Antiquarian Society took the initial strides to establish a purpose-built local museum (Fig. 11.1). The building had already opened its doors to the public in 1894, but it was not until the turn of the century that its annex galleries were constructed, its front lawn landscaped, and

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its main entrance revealed.<sup>1</sup> On 23 June 1900, the scaffolding covering the central portal was ceremoniously dismantled to expose a monumental glass mosaic, nine meters wide and six high, designed by Biel artist Léo-Paul Robert and manufactured by Neuchâtel-based British émigré Clement John Heaton (Fig. 11.2).<sup>2</sup> The mosaic soon became the face of the museum's branding and, in fact, its promotional capacity was predicted even before its completion; the year prior, the museum published a new collection guide featuring on its cover Robert's design for the in-progress mosaic.<sup>3</sup>



**Fig. 11.2:** Léo-Paul Robert (designer) and Clement John Heaton (manufacturer), Mosaic over the BHM main entrance, completed 1900. Photo: BHM, Bern/Christine Moor (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0).

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed chronology of the BHM's development as both building and institution, see Karl Zimmermann, "Chronikalische Notizen zur Museumsgeschichte: 100 Jahre Bernisches Historisches Museum, 1894–1994," *Berner Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Heimatkunde* 56, no. 3 (1994): 371–459. See also Zimmermann's study of the Bern Antiquarian Society, which was one of the precursors to the BHM: "Die Antiquarische Gesellschaft von Bern (1837–1858)," *Berner Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Heimatkunde* 54 (1992): 59–96. For a historical survey of the building, see Anne-Marie Biland, *Bernisches Historisches Museum Architekturführer* (Bern: Stämpfli, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> For a brief discussion of Robert's collaborations with Heaton (especially their work on the staircase of the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Neuchâtel), see Anne Ceresole, "The Work in Cloisonné of Clement John Heaton," *The Journal of the Decorative Arts Society, 1850–the Present* 20 (1996): 34–42.

<sup>3</sup> *Führer durch das historische Museum in Bern* (Bern: K.J. Wyss, 1899).

The work's art nouveau style and symbolist content—an allegory of History and Poetry—were eagerly anticipated by the museum's building committee, but they were an abrupt departure from what had been planned over the preceding decades. The BHM's head architect, André Lambert, had originally envisioned a historicist fresco commemorating a decisive event in the development of Swiss history and identity.<sup>4</sup> Given the museum's neo-Gothic exterior, it appears to have been self-evident that this scene would be drawn from the Middle Ages, during the purported glory days of the Old Swiss Confederation (Alte Eidgenossenschaft), when a group of eight cantons formed a pact to defend each other against their more powerful neighbors. In the nineteenth century, this alliance was commonly believed to be the precursor to the modern nation, which was formed in 1848 and had similarly defined itself against France and Germany.<sup>5</sup>

Following this logic, the BHM's building committee in the 1890s began soliciting drafts for the decoration of the main entrance from two prominent history and battle painters, Robert von Steiger and Gustav Adolf Karl Closs, both of whom fashioned watercolors celebrating the storied military triumphs of the medieval confederation.<sup>6</sup> Most preferred was Closs's rendering of the 1476 Battle of Murten, the penultimate fight of the Burgundian Wars, when the Swiss in a surprising string of victories defeated Charles the Bold's far larger, better trained, and more equipped armies (Fig. 11.3). This draft soon fell out of favor, and Léo-Paul Robert, one of the artists on the building committee responsible for evaluating the suitability of Closs's design, was asked by the rest of the committee to take over the project himself.<sup>7</sup> While the reasons for terminating Closs's contract were not stated in the meeting notes of the BHM's building committee, what is clear is that all parties involved were quickly taken by Robert's vision even though his desire for a mosaic rather than a fresco bloated the budget.<sup>8</sup>

4 Adolphe Tüchle was initially the architect responsible, after which Lambert took over. See Zimmermann, "Chronikalische Notizen," 377–78; Biland, *BHM Architekturführer*, 4–10.

5 On modern Switzerland's channeling of the medieval confederation in history and myth, see Guy P. Marchal, *Schweizer Gebrauchsgeschichte: Geschichtsbilder, Mythenbildung und nationale Identität* (Basel: Schwabe, 2007); Guy P. Marchal, "Medievalism, the Politics of Memory and Swiss National Identity," in *The Uses of the Middle Ages in Modern European States: History, Nationhood and the Search for Origins*, ed. R.J.W. Evans and Guy P. Marchal (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 197–220; Oliver Zimmer, "Competing Memories of the Nation: Liberal Historians and the Reconstruction of the Swiss Past, 1870–1900," *Past & Present* 168 (2000): 194–226.

6 Robert von Steiger's proposal depicting the Battle of Laupen is still preserved at the BHM, Inv. Nr. H/51760. Von Steiger also produced a draft showing the foundation of the city of Bern, but it no longer survives; it is only mentioned in the protocol for the BHM's building committee: "Protokolle der Sitzungen des Bauausschusses für das Nationalmuseum, 1891–1898," Bern, Bern Historical Museum (hereafter cited as BHM), Direktionsarchiv, 1.3.2, 52 (entry for 19 September 1893). I am deeply grateful to Susan Marti for calling my attention to these meeting notes, as well as to Barbara Weber for graciously providing access.

7 Robert's initial draft is also at the BHM, Inv. Nr. H/51076.

8 As stated in a meeting of the building committee, "preference should be given to the best and most beautiful method." Biland, *BHM Architekturführer*, 19.





**Fig. 11.3:** Gustav Adolf Karl Closs, *Battle of Murten*, watercolor draft for the BHM's main entrance, ca. 1893, BHM, Inv. Nr. H/24223. Photo: BHM, Bern/Stefan Rebsamen (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0).

The sudden pivot away from Closs's *Battle of Murten* was also a choice against the collecting practices that had undergirded Bern's museum and cultural landscape since the 1830s, when the idea to form a purpose-built local museum began to materialize and the first steps were made to assemble a suitable collection. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the parameters of the collection regularly shifted and became increasingly capacious—at the time of the museum's opening in 1894, it contained a broad array of artworks spanning archaeological fragments, sculpture, and ethnographica—but one thing agreed upon since the beginning was that the core of the collection was to be medieval. The keystone of that programmatic choice was the so-called *Burgunderbeute* or "Burgundian booty," a vast group of sumptuous treasures that Swiss soldiers had looted from Burgundian tents after a string of victories at the Battles of Grandson and Murten in 1476. Ranging from cannons and hand weaponry through goldsmith works and jewelry to tapestries and banners, each work came to be considered a historical and art-historical unicum, since hardly any courtly Burgundian works otherwise survived the French Revolution; the status of the objects from the *Burgunderbeute* as loot paradoxically preserved them for posterity.



It was largely because of these works that the museum even came into existence. At stake in their preservation and display was not just the establishment of a quality collection, but the enshrining of a nascent national identity. With the formation of a unified, trilingual state in 1848 came a certain amount of discord regarding what constituted Swiss identity and cultural heritage.<sup>9</sup> The matter became especially visible in the debates about the new country's plans for a national museum, since it was unclear both where to build it as well as with what kinds of objects to fill it. What began as widespread feelings of uncertainty, and at times apathy, soon evolved into a bitter competition, with cities across Switzerland—mainly Basel, Bern, Lucerne, and Zurich—asserting that the objects in their possession emblemized the larger population.<sup>10</sup> To best their competitors, the Bernese, rather than merely claiming their right to house the national museum because their city was the capital, tapped into the symbolic potential of the *Burgunderbeute*. In fact, they were so confident in their case that they began planning their building before parliament had even reached a decision about where to build.<sup>11</sup> In the end, perhaps to curb Bern's political power, the Federal Assembly's upper and lower chambers voted Zurich as the location of the future national museum; Bern's in-progress structure was demoted and renamed to today's Bern Historical Museum.<sup>12</sup> Despite this defeat, the *Burgunderbeute* was still installed as it had been planned from the beginning, when the structure was supposed to house the national collection. When the building opened in 1894, the works occupied a series of Burgundian-themed galleries on the museum's lavishly fenestrated *piano nobile* (Fig. 11.4), whose towering dimensions are believed to have been purpose-built for displaying the millefleur tapestries with Burgundian heraldry that had been taken by the Swiss in the fifteenth century.<sup>13</sup>

The curious choice of Robert's allegorical mosaic for the museum's main entrance and advertising campaign may have been an attempt at rebranding after the lost bid for the national museum, but the decision's sudden and seemingly arbitrary nature also suggests a certain degree of avoidance after the decades spent planning and investing in the *Burgunderbeute's* centrality. What exactly did this set of objects come to represent and how and why could a well-established culture of medievalism (including medievalism's modernisms) be so quickly replaced by the meta-narratives of art nouveau symbolism? This essay seeks to trace the slow rise and sudden fall of the *Burgunderbeute* as a cultural, patrimonial, and nationalist symbol. In order to recog-

9 Modern Switzerland's fourth national language, Romansh, was not recognized in the 1848 constitution; it was added in subsequent revisions.

10 Tommy Sturzenegger, *Der grosse Streit: Wie das Landesmuseum nach Zürich kam* (Zurich: Verlag Hans Rohr, 1999), 91–114.

11 Sturzenegger, *Grosse Streit*, 100–104; Zimmermann, "Chronikalische Notizen," 374–78.

12 Sturzenegger, *Grosse Streit*, 63–80, 177–80.

13 Susan Marti, "Erobertes Gut: Die neue Dauerausstellung im Bernischen Historischen Museum," *Podium* 2 (2012): 11–12.



**Fig. 11.4:** Burgundian Gallery in the BHM, ca. 1905, BHM, neg. 2185. Photo: BHM, Bern (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0).

nize the weight of these shifts, it is necessary to take a *longue durée* approach that accounts for what these artworks were and how they were defined through time. As we shall see, already in the Middle Ages these looted artworks constituted a highly variable and constantly shifting group and they remained such into the early modern period. The idea that these heterogeneous fragments had anything in common—let alone belonged in Switzerland—was in many ways an invention of the decades flanking Swiss unification in the mid-nineteenth century, when politicians, professors, and collectors alike were eager to find a group of objects into which they could retroactively read a cultural origin story. The ultimate failure of such nationalistic mythmaking, we might say, had little to do with the works themselves or their historical context and was more likely based upon a new kind of consciousness that medieval artworks were perhaps inadequate symbols for expressing purportedly modern ideals at the turn of the twentieth century.

## A Brief History of the *Burgunderbeute*

Among the earliest images showing the Swiss victories in the Burgundian Wars are those in Diebold Schilling the Elder's *Berner Chronik* (Bern Chronicle), a three-volume illustrated work documenting the history of Bern from its foundation until the time of the set's completion in 1484.<sup>14</sup> While the first two volumes were based on already extant city chronicles, the third and by far the most richly illustrated volume brings to life Schilling's own eyewitness account of the wars, which he observed while traveling with Swiss troops to their victories at Héricourt, Grandson, Murten, and Nancy.<sup>15</sup> After a series of bloody battle scenes accompanied by descriptions of the confederates' innovative martial tactics, the reader arrives at an image showing the aftermath of the Battle of Grandson on 2 March 1476, when the Swiss entered Charles the Bold's abandoned camp to find a cluster of sumptuously embroidered tents bearing the duke's heraldry (Fig. 11.5). As was customary at the time, the soldiers stayed on site for three days to bury the dead and to collect their booty; in the process, they discovered a trove of treasures that, according to Schilling, was so heavy they almost did not want to claim it as their own anymore.<sup>16</sup> Later that year, when the confederates defeated Charles's army yet again at Murten on 22 June, they discovered just how successful their earlier pillaging had been; hardly any riches remained at camp, but the Swiss stayed again for three days to extract all that they could from the reserves of food, wine, and animals.<sup>17</sup>

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14 There are a number of related manuscripts produced by Diebold Schilling the Elder and his nephew, Diebold Schilling the Younger. Schilling the Elder's *Spiezer Chronik* from 1484 or 1485 remains unfinished and does not include the Burgundian Wars (Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Mss.h.h.1.15); Schilling the Elder's 1481–84 (?) *Grosse Burgunderchronik*, sometimes also called the *Zürcher Schilling*, is closely related to the third volume of his *Berner Chronik* (Zentralbibliothek Zürich, MS A 5); Schilling the Younger's 1511–13 *Luzerner Chronik* includes significant passages about the Burgundian Wars and the *Burgunderbeute*, since some of the spoils were on display in the city around the time of the manuscript's creation (Lucerne, Korporation Luzern, S 23 fol.).

15 All three volumes are now kept in Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Mss.h.h.1.1–3. For a brief bibliography on the third volume, on which my discussion will focus, see Josef Zemp, *Die schweizerischen Bilderchroniken und ihre Architektur-Darstellungen* (Zurich: F. Schulthess, 1897), 60–70; Walter Muschg and Eduard Achilles Gessler, *Die Schweizer Bilderchroniken des 15./16. Jahrhunderts* (Zurich: Atlantis-Verlag, 1941), 165–72; Gustav Tobler, ed., *Die Berner Chronik des Diebold Schilling, 1468–1484*, 2 vols. (Bern: K.J. Wyss, 1897–1901), 2: 331–50.

16 Walter Schaufelberger, *Der Alte Schweizer und sein Krieg: Studien zur Kriegsführung vornehmlich im 15. Jahrhundert* (Zurich: Europa Verlag, 1952), 240n18. See also Florens Deuchler, *Die Burgunderbeute: Inventar der Beutestücke aus den Schlachten von Grandson, Murten und Nancy, 1476/1477* (Bern: Stämpfli, 1963), 15–18.

17 Schaufelberger, *Alte Schweizer*, 240n18; Deuchler, *Burgunderbeute*, 19–22.



**Fig. 11.5:** Swiss troops entering an abandoned Burgundian camp at Grandson, from Diebold Schilling the Elder's *Amtliche Berner Chronik*, vol. 3, 1478–83, Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Mss.h.h.I.3, p. 654. Photo: <https://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/bbb/Mss-hh-I0003>.

Out of the 277 watercolors in Schilling's third volume, there are only a handful of passing glimpses of the artworks plundered. Charles the Bold's treasury tent is shown as perched atop a hill as an architectural reliquary of sorts, from which silver and gilt vessels are taken and packed into wooden boxes for transport to Lucerne, where the booty was to be sorted, documented, and appraised (Fig. 11.6). The topographical prominence of Charles's tent, however, belies the visibility of its contents. The number of soldiers and containers far outweighs the number of objects depicted, perhaps an indication that of paramount importance was not the nature of things discovered, but rather the fact that they were now things possessed. The only illustration in Schilling's chronicle that actually shows objects being preserved or celebrated is the one that depicts the looted Burgundian flags ceremoniously brought from Grandson to Bern Minster (Fig. 11.7). Yet here again, it seems that they were not valued for their objecthood or status as trophies. Given the overlaps between heraldry, office, and personhood, these banners most likely were understood as a substitute for the conquered



**Fig. 11.6:** Swiss troops looting Charles the Bold's tent at Grandson, from Diebold Schilling the Elder's *Amtliche Berner Chronik*, vol. 3, 1478–83, Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Mss.h.h.I.3, p. 774. Photo: <https://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/bbb/Mss-hh-I0003>.



**Fig. 11.7:** Bernese carrying Burgundian flags into the Bern Minster, from Diebold Schilling the Elder's *Amtliche Berner Chronik*, vol. 3, 1478–83, Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Mss.h.h.I.3, p. 829. Photo: <https://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/bbb/Mss-hh-I0003>.

military leaders.<sup>18</sup> In choosing to depict the heraldic flags here as raised and flying, a common trope throughout the manuscript to identify the parties entering battle scenes, Schilling thus seems to advance the notion that Swiss soldiers were now the arbiters of Burgundy's new identity.

Already in the fifteenth century, it was relatively unclear what the cultural, historical, artistic, or monetary values of the Burgundian spoils were. In many ways, these systems of value were in conflict, at least according to our modern perspective. The items that the confederates were primarily interested in keeping were the banners, artillery, and other kinds of military paraphernalia that indexed Burgundy's defeat. Yet this collection did not remain intact and was dispersed across the confederation; Bern received the majority of the objects and placed them in the armory and minster.<sup>19</sup> Also included in this category, it is believed, were the millefleur tapestries, perhaps because of the prominent placement of the arms of Charles's predecessor, Philip the Good,

<sup>18</sup> Regula Schmid, "Fahnergeschichten: Erinnern in der spätmittelalterlichen Gemeinde," *Traverse: Zeitschrift für Geschichte* 6 (1999): 39–48; Hans Belting, *An Anthropology of Images: Picture, Medium, Body*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 62–83.

<sup>19</sup> Most important to note here is that the spoils of Murten went to Basel: Deuchler, *Burgunderbeute*, 29–32; Rudolf Wackernagel, "Basels Anteil an der Burgunderbeute," *Basler Jahrbuch* (1894): 57–68.





**Fig. 11.8:** Parts of the *Burgunderbeute* on display in Lucerne, from Diebold Schilling the Younger's *Luzerner Chronik*, 1513, Luzern, Korporation Luzern, S 23 fol., p. 202. Photo: <https://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/kol/S0023-2>.

throughout the foliage.<sup>20</sup> Gold and silver works, jewels, and vestments were prized only for their profitability; most were immediately transported to a storehouse in Lucerne to await their sale, the proceeds of which would in turn pay the soldiers for their services.<sup>21</sup> The anticipated monetary value of these works was so great that it was detrimental to their preservation. Following a common pattern in medieval warfare, artworks were disassembled and textiles were cut into smaller pieces to ease their transport, to split among different members of the confederation, and to produce more wares to sell.<sup>22</sup> One of the more famous images of the *Burgunderbeute* from Diebold Schilling the Younger's *Luzerner Chronik* (Lucerne Chronicle) shows a rather heterogenous grouping in a chamber of a tower along the city's fortifications. While this image at first glance seems

<sup>20</sup> Anna Rapp Buri and Monica Stucky-Schürer, "Die burgundischen Tapisserien in Bern: 'nicht nur der Touristenwelt einen berühmten Genuss gewähren, sondern auch die Berner Herzen zu edler Gesinnung und That erheben,'" *Kunst + Architektur in der Schweiz* 53 (2002): 26–35, at 27.

<sup>21</sup> Deuchler, *Burgunderbeute*, 23–24, 59–61, 75–91.

<sup>22</sup> Deuchler, *Burgunderbeute*, 28–44.

to celebrate things collected, it in fact commemorates them before their impending dispersal on the market (Fig. 11.8). Drawing on the visual rhetoric of church treasury inventories, which in their accumulation represented liquid capital that could be relied on in times of need, the *Burgunderbeute* here might be understood to function similarly: as a collection whose value would ultimately be distributed to facilitate the common good.<sup>23</sup>

Excitement surrounding the weapons, flags, and tapestries on view in Bern's armory and minster quickly started to wane, as evidenced by the sudden paucity of written or visual sources that attest to their placement or display after the Reformation. Between 1537 and 1539, the objects from the Burgundian Wars remaining in the minster that had not been melted, sold, or transferred elsewhere were packed in boxes and put in the town hall, where they were combined with other groups of looted objects, namely the textiles from the treasuries of Königsfelden Abbey and Lausanne Cathedral, which had been sacked by the Bernese during the Reformation.<sup>24</sup> Over the next 250 years or so, our only source of knowledge for the looted objects' status is a small handful of inventories and seventeenth-century catalogues of heraldry, flags, and banners (*Fahnenbücher*).<sup>25</sup> Most of the inventories evidence a change in location from one attic to another, rather than a change in the status of the objects' visibility or display. The tapestries' whereabouts are certainly the best documented; they are known to have gone from the town hall back to the minster (though stored in the sacristy) and from there to the newly founded library.<sup>26</sup> In the case of the flags, the textual record came to stand in for the objects themselves, with the *Fahnenbücher* produced to document and memorialize a group of objects that could not be on view because they had virtually disintegrated.<sup>27</sup>

23 Lucas Burkart, "Schatz und Schatzbildung: Reflexionen zu disziplinärem Interesse und interdisziplinärem Zugang," in *Le trésor au Moyen Âge: Questions et perspectives de recherche*, ed. Lucas Burkart et al. (Neuchâtel: Institut d'Histoire de l'art et de Muséologie, 2005), 1–26, at 2–11. See also the editors' introduction for the same volume, vii–x.

24 Paul Hofer, *Die Kunstdenkmäler des Kantons Bern, Band 3: Die Staatsbauten der Stadt Bern* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1947), 172.

25 The main sources relied upon in the secondary literature are the Bern armory's 1687 inventory and the minster's inventory of 1795, both of which have been transcribed: Rudolf Wegeli, *Das Berner Zeughausinventar von 1687* (Bern: K.J. Wyss, 1939); Jakob Stammler, *Der Domschatz von Lausanne und seine Ueberreste: zugleich eine Untersuchung über den ältern Bestand des historischen Museums in Bern* (Bern: Nydegger & Baumgart, 1894), 90–92.

26 On the status of the objects at the town hall: Quirinus Reichen, "Fundstücke: Vom Rathaus ins Museum: Altertümer des Staates und Staatsaltertümer," *Berner Zeitschrift für Geschichte* 79, no. 3 (2017): 112–27; A. Zesiger, "Der Burgunderkrieg im bernischen Rathaus," *Blätter für bernische Geschichte, Kunst und Altertumskunde* 22, no. 3–4 (1926): 169–78. On the tapestries, see Rapp Buri and Stucky-Schürer, "Die burgundischen Tapisserien," 29–30.

27 A survey of flags from the *Burgunderbeute* was undertaken for a 1969 exhibition at the BHM: *Die Burgunderbeute und Werke Burgundischer Hofkunst* (Bern: Stämpfli, 1969), 94–166. For a broader discussion of Swiss flags, heraldry, and their documentation in so-called *Fahnenbücher*, see Albert Bruckner and Berty Bruckner, *Schweizer Fahnenbuch* (St. Gallen: Zollikofer, 1942).



**Fig. 11.9:** Johannes Dünz, *Group Portrait of Bern's Library Committee*, 1696, Bern, Burgerbibliothek, M.11. Photo: Bern, Burgerbibliothek.

It was only at the turn of the eighteenth century that any of the scattered artworks of the Burgundian Wars took on any cultural significance, this time in the context of Bern's early Enlightenment milieu (Fig. 11.9). In Johannes Dünz's group portrait of the city's newly formed library committee, the intellectual leaders of the city sit around a table decked with a lustrous blue cloth embroidered with the signature Burgundian wisps of flames and arms.<sup>28</sup> Staged within the city's *Kunstkammer*-turned-library, the painting functions much like the room itself by presenting the viewer with incongruous

<sup>28</sup> Depicted in the painting is the commission overseeing what was then an educational library for the university (*Bibliothek der Hohen Schule*), which, as suggested from the objects in the portrait, also doubled as a *Wunder-* and *Kunstkammer* after receiving foundational gifts from the doctor Wilhelm Fabry. In 1951, the Burgerbibliothek Bern was established, which became the repository for most of the surviving manuscripts and special collections of this original library, including Dünz's painting. Brief chronologies of these two institutions are provided in: Susanna Tschui, "Burgerbibliothek Bern," in *Handbuch der historischen Buchbestände in der Schweiz*, ed. Zentralbibliothek Zürich (Zurich: Olms-Weidmann, 2011), 193–97; Claudia Engler, "Zentralbibliothek der Universitätsbibliothek Bern," in *Handbuch der historischen Buchbestände*, ed. Zentralbibliothek Zürich, 240–61. On the status of the library as *Kunstkammer*, see Susanne Ritter-Lutz, "Die bernische Kunstkammer im 18. Jahrhundert," in *Sammeln und Sammlungen im 18. Jahrhundert in der Schweiz*, ed. Benno Schubiger, Dorothea Schwinn Schürmann, and Cecilia Hurley (Geneva: Slatkine, 2007), 47–66. A brief historical contextualization of this painting is provided by Claudia Engler, "Albrecht von Haller as Librarian: Searching and Finding in the Universe of Books," in *Scholars in Action: The Practice of Knowledge and the Figure of the Savant in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century*, ed. André Holenstein, Hubert Steinke, and Martin Stuber (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 253–65, at 255–57.



objects and epistemological tensions in need of resolve: the relationship between local and global, art and knowledge, secular and religious power. The sitters' arrangement around the table—recalling both Dutch group portraits and Last Supper scenes—seems to probe the relationship between Bern's Protestant patricians and their city's Catholic (i.e., Burgundian) past. What appears at first as a rather enigmatic painting, however, starts to come into order through the table's tapestry. Given the lack of written sources and inventories from the time, it is impossible to tell whether the library actually possessed the depicted textile, but that might not matter all that much. The painting's veracity comes not from truthful depictions, but from the way in which objects of material culture support and reify the social and intellectual culture being ordered within the room. Negotiations in the early modern period often occurred around a table and, in the process, the logic of power that undergirded such negotiations was also exposed and laid open: put "on the table," so to speak.<sup>29</sup> The tapestry and the Burgundian context from which it came, then, support the discourses of knowledge represented by the large red book scaled larger than the heads of the sitters; the textile is a fictive fragment from the past that calls into relief how medieval bonds formed by military supremacy had been superseded by an early Enlightenment ideology that exercised its power through books and education.

## The Search for National Symbols

The second quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed the formation of the mythos of the *Burgunderbeute* as a distinct group of objects with material, artistic, and above all political resonances, but not for the reasons one might initially expect. Unlike the Enlightenment rhetoric of Dünz's painting, which situated the role of Burgundian victories as the beginning of a narrative of hegemony and progress, the common feeling among Bern's patrician leaders after the turn of the century was one of anxiety and inadequacy. In 1837, when the first strides were made to form an Antiquarian Society and museum, the eponymous committee expressed concern that they were extremely behind in doing so, both among the Swiss cities and on the world stage. Their goal was to create a small museum in a gallery space on the upper floors of the former church of the Hospital Brothers of St. Anthony that would function "to instruct, benefit, and honor the whole country" as well as to preserve objects that were scattered across the country and showed the effects of centuries of neglect. The act of safekeeping material culture was also framed as a patriotic duty, since not doing so endan-

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29 Sasha Rossman, "On Neutral Grounds: Gerard Ter Borch's *The Swearing of the Oath of Ratification of the Treaty of Münster, 15 May 1648*," in *Le fond de l'oeuvre: Arts visuels et sécularisation à l'époque moderne*, ed. Émilie Chedeville, Étienne Jollet, and Claire Sourdin (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2020), 153–77.

gered the present. One of the most looming threats expressed by committee members was the greed of Swiss art dealers, who sold their objects to “foreign art-lovers” and in the process “lost their fatherland.”<sup>30</sup>

Despite the Antiquarian Society’s success in courting donors to make substantial gifts to build the collection, the museum failed to attract public attention or sustained governmental support. In the fall of 1843, Bern’s city council, which owned the building and rented it out, voted to sell the building and terminate the society’s lease, an event that brought to the surface underlying feelings and suppressed biases about why a local museum was culturally necessary. In an urgent petition to the city council to keep their exhibition space, the society’s president Johann Anton von Tillier described cultural heritage as under a siege that needed to be fought with “the remaining remnants, particularly the beautiful weapons, with which our forefathers most gloriously fought and won our independence.” More alarmingly, he attempted to rally council support by blaming Bern’s Jewish population, which according to him had begun in the last few years to buy up antiquities across the cantons in order to sell them to enrich themselves and collections abroad at the expense of the “fatherland.”<sup>31</sup> Such scapegoating was its own kind of tired medievalism, since after the *Burgunderbeute* objects were taken from Grandson in 1476, various court documents villainized members of society’s purported margins who were believed to have stolen treasures from wagons en route to their appraisal.<sup>32</sup> Tillier almost certainly was aware of the historical (mi)stakes of his message, having written multiple monographs on the history of the Old and New Confederations. If we are to correct his rhetoric, it seems that the biggest threat against the defined “fatherland” came primarily from within. Much like in the fifteenth century, when the *Burgunderbeute* was seen by the victorious as a means of compensation and profit, preservation of artworks for the nineteenth-century men in power was forgone in favor of the bottom line.

After Swiss unification in 1848 and the naming of Bern as the capital, the plans for a museum were still at a standstill and the city turned its attention to a new mode of display: the festival procession, the focus of which was the promotion of the *Burgunderbeute* as the city’s and nation’s new cultural symbol. The objects were still scattered and mostly hidden across various locations in Bern and elsewhere; in 1853, the citizens brought together all objects believed to have been taken in the Burgundian Wars for a grand national celebration taking place over two days on the anniversaries of the Battles of Laupen (21 June 1339) and Murten (22 June 1476). Documented by a book of textual commentaries as well as a lavishly illustrated picture book (*Festalbum*), the procession and its memorialization in text and image were intended to be a decisive statement that the nation’s day of celebration should not be the obvious choices of 1 August (the day of the advent of the modern nation) or 6 March (when

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30 Zimmermann, “Die Antiquarische Gesellschaft,” 60–62.

31 Zimmermann, “Die Antiquarische Gesellschaft,” 70–73.

32 Deuchler, *Burgunderbeute*, 29–44, at 30.

Bern joined the Old Swiss Confederation in 1353), but instead in June on the days of two medieval military victories (Fig. 11.10).<sup>33</sup>



**Fig. 11.10:** Heinrich Jenny (illustrator) and Kümmerly and Wittmer (printer), *Triumphal Wagon with Charles the Bold's Tent* from Ludwig Stantz, *Festalbum*, 1855. Photo: Universitätsbibliothek J.C. Senckenberg Frankfurt am Main [2018]; urn:nbn:de:hebis:30:4-101850.

Such nation-building events were fairly common in mid-nineteenth-century Europe, but they carried a particular weight for the Swiss.<sup>34</sup> Not only was there no national museum or institution in the country's capital where citizens could connect with their past, but there was also a widespread belief that "Swissness" was a feeling or spirit that needed to be enacted and perhaps practiced. Unlike other European nations that could

<sup>33</sup> The *Festalbum* was produced in color, with illustrations by Heinrich Jenny: Ludwig Stantz, ed., *Festalbum der Feier des Eintritts Berns in den Schweizerbund, 6. März 1353, begangen im Jahr 1853 an den Siegestagen v. Laupen u. Murten, 21. Jun. 1339 und 22. Jun. 1476* (Bern: Stämpfli, 1855). There was also a smaller, cheaper, black-and-white version: *Panorama des historischen Festzuges der Eintrittsfeier Berns in den Schweizerbund 1853* (Bern: Lithographie Kümmerly & Wittmer, 1853). The textual commentary, *Beschreibung des Bundesfestes, gefeiert zum Andenken an den Eintritt Berns in den Schweizerbund den 21. und 22. Brachmonat 1853* (Bern: Haller, 1853), provides a detailed, eyewitness account of the events of 1853.

<sup>34</sup> For a list of different festivals in Switzerland, see Eduard Hoffmann-Krayer, *Feste und Bräuche des Schweizervolkes: Kleines Handbuch des schweizerischen Volksbrauchs der Gegenwart in gemeinfasslicher Darstellung* (Zurich: Schulthess & Co., 1913), 82–83.

conjure concrete architectural, material, and dynastic evidence to illustrate their resurgent power, Switzerland's identity as a politically fragmented and linguistically diverse confederation-turned-nation had always been more fashioned than built. For that reason, a performance was an ideal medium to reify the camaraderie and bonds of the past.<sup>35</sup> It was not just any performance that could communicate cultural sentiments to the masses, but festivals and processions in particular, since it was believed that their "popular" nature made them distinctly Swiss. Most other cultural signifiers, such as literature, theater, and opera, were imports from France, Italy, Germany, and Austria. Especially in the German-speaking parts of Switzerland, there was nothing perceived as high culture in their dialect, so they had to make their own.<sup>36</sup>

As implied by the *Festalbum's* introduction, the event was meant to remedy these perceived shortcomings by articulating the type of medieval culture that needed to be recovered, performed, and celebrated: a Switzerland with a shared history of military prowess that became united through fighting against its common enemies. The Old Swiss Confederation, the authors stated, was "a contract of protection and defense between friends against foes . . . a martial alliance, an alliance of arms" (*ein kriegerischer Bund, ein Waffenbund*). This ideal union from the past was also decidedly populist: a group of rogue but united soldiers who condemned the "hate" of the Hapsburgs at Laupen and who conquered against all odds the "tyrannical lusts of Burgundy" at Murten.<sup>37</sup> Fitting with this introduction, the accompanying sixty lithographs designed by Ludwig Stantz and Heinrich Jenny show contemporary citizens from across the canton bringing to life this version of the past. They wear costumes modeled after the watercolors in Schilling the Elder's *Berner Chronik* and carry pieces of the *Burgunderbeute* on floats and in their hands.<sup>38</sup> The grand finale was a "triumphal wagon" of the objects taken from Charles the Bold, whose plundered tent was recreated with Burgundian tapestries and adorned with tattered banners and a suit of plate armor (see Fig. 11.10). Not insignificantly, such historical artworks were scaled smaller and in washed-out colors. Jenny's focus is not so much the display of the past, but rather the function of the past as a prop for the present and future, as evidenced by the group of young boys taking the tools of history into their own hands and leading the way. The professed goal of this arrangement, according to the album's introduction, was to give

35 Marchal, "Medievalism," 206–10; Daniel Schläppi, "Zwischen Familiensinn und Kriegsrausch: Institutionen aus ständischer Zeit als Generatoren moderner männlicher Gefühlslagen," *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 39, no. 1 (2012): 37–63, at 47–54.

36 Richard R. Ruppel, "Performing Swiss Heimat: Zu Geschichte und Funktion des traditionellen Bundesfeierspiels," in *Schweiz schreiben: Zu Konstruktion und Dekonstruktion des Mythos Schweiz in der Gegenwartsliteratur*, ed. Jürgen Barkhoff and Valerie Heffernan (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 159–76, at 159–62.

37 Stantz, *Festalbum*, 2.

38 The description of the part of the procession devoted to the Battle of Murten mentions specifically the *Berner Chronik* as a source of inspiration; Stantz, *Festalbum*, 4–5.

birth to a “family drama of the fatherland” that allowed spectators to see their ancestors, their “sons of the Alps,” and themselves simultaneously. It produced an event that, through the “remembering of a great, vanished past” could fill “all hearts with great excitement” about their new nation.<sup>39</sup>

The Bernese of the new capital may have overplayed their cards by so baldly claiming that they held the tools for unifying the nation. Soon after the festival took place, a new group of objects began to compete with the *Burgunderbeute* as cultural emblems. In the 1850s and 1860s, amidst the urbanization of the shores of the nearby lakes of Neuchâtel, Biel, and Murten, archaeologists began uncovering evidence of innovative forms of Iron and Bronze Age pile dwellings (*Pfahlbauten*, *palafittes*) that once sat above the surface of the water (Fig. 11.11).<sup>40</sup>



**Fig. 11.11:** Rodolphe Auguste Bachelin, *Phoenicians and Pile Dwellers Bartering before a Willow Grove*, 1867, Zurich, Schweizerisches Nationalmuseum, LM-30487. Photo: Schweizerisches Nationalmuseum.

<sup>39</sup> Stantz, *Festalbum*, 1. The German texts refer to “ein Erinnerungsfest an eine dahingeschwundene, grosse Vergangenheit” and “einen Auftritt, der alle Herzen mit hoher Begeisterung erfüllte.”

<sup>40</sup> A good *longue durée* perspective on the history of excavations at such sites is provided by Pierre Crotti, Carmen Buchiller, and Gilbert Kaenel, eds., *Les Lacustres: 150 ans d'archéologie entre Vaud et Fribourg* (Lausanne: Musée cantonal d'archéologie et d'histoire, 2004). See also Andrea Bachmann and Ursula Hügi, eds., *Die Pfahlbauer: 150 Objekte erzählen 150 Geschichten* (Zurich: Swiss National Museum, 2004). For a shorter discussion in English, see A. P. Fitzpatrick, “The Finds from La Tène in the British Museum,” *The Antiquities Journal* 98 (2018): 43–80.

Ferdinand Keller, an archaeologist and founder of Zurich's Antiquarian Society, (mis) ordered the fragments by producing reconstructions based on recently contemporary settlements in New Guinea—a typical denial of the coeval nature of world history—and other archaeologists and collectors began buying up the fragments for private collections since there was no national museum to house them.<sup>41</sup> They eventually became so popular that they were sent to the Paris World's Fair of 1867, where Swiss collectors like Friedrich Schwab exhibited not only actual fragments, but also paintings by Rodolphe-Auguste Bachelin to help contextualize and mythologize them.<sup>42</sup> On the one hand, the tools' arrangement as trophies in Schwab's accompanying brochure indicated their status as a corollary of, if not a replacement for, the *Burgunderbeute* (Fig. 11.12). On the other hand, their romantic adaptation in painting also conveyed something that the medieval spoils could not: a Swiss origin story that was not militaristic.<sup>43</sup> Bachelin's landscape scene employed a radical foregrounding to stage an encounter between the so-called *Urhelvetier* (primordial Helvetians) who lived in the floating dwellings and the Phoenicians. Unlike the Old Swiss Confederation that fought against outsiders, here the viewer could witness the ancient, mythical beginnings of a Switzerland known for its neutrality, measured diplomacy, and economic innovation.

Around 1880, as plans for a national museum again started to gain momentum, the archaeological fragments of the pile dwellings were among the only objects that everyone across the country could agree were shared patrimony. The city of Bern, with its eyes set on being the location of the future museum, attempted to supplement the premodern *Burgunderbeute* with its prehistoric counterpart by courting local collector Friederich Bürki, but to no avail; Bürki died midway through negotiations and his heirs sold his archaeological collection at an auction in Basel in 1881. This event, like the failure of the Antiquarian Society some decades prior, caused widespread panic about the loss of cultural heritage. Two years later, Salomon Vögelin, professor of art history in Zurich and a member of the National Council, declared to the council

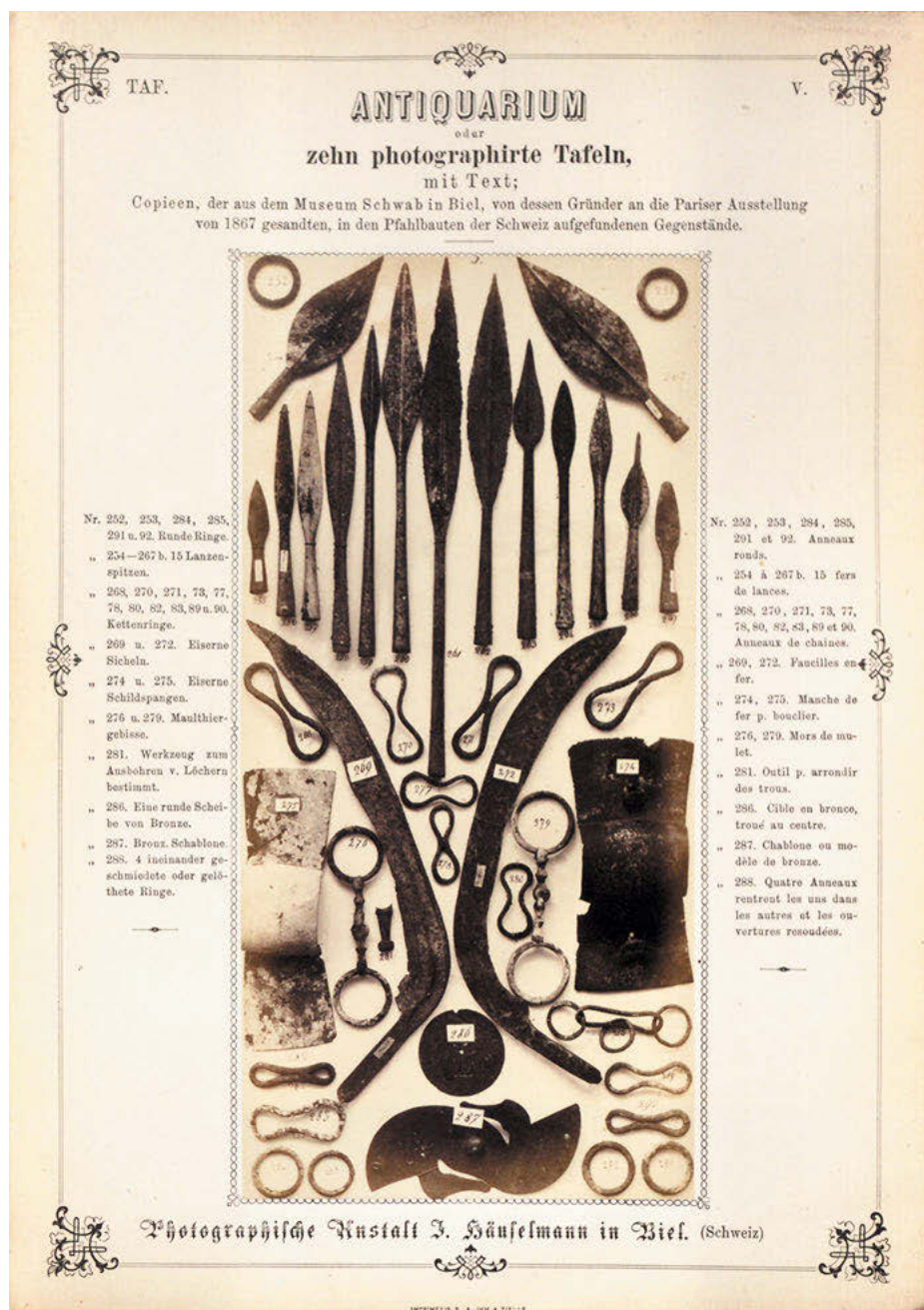
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41 An image of Keller's reconstruction is in his "Die keltischen Pfahlbauten in den Schweizerseen," *Mittheilungen der antiquarischen Gesellschaft in Zürich* 9, no. 3 (1854): 65–101, at Plate 1, fig. 4. On the denial of the coeval and the notion of the "ethnographic present," see Paola Ivanov, "Rethinking Coevalness: Entangled History and the Objects of Ethnological Museums," in *Art/Histories in Transcultural Dynamics: Narratives, Concepts, and Practices at Work, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries*, ed. Pauline Bachmann et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 47–69.

42 J. Häuselmann, *Antiquarium oder Zehn photographirte Tafeln mit deutschem und französischem Text. Copieen der aus dem Museum Schwab in Biel von dessen Gründer an die Pariser Ausstellung von 1867 gesandten, in den Pfahlbauten der Schweiz aufgefundenen Gegenstände* (Biel: Häuselmann, 1867). For a brief contextualization of these photographs, see Fitzpatrick, "Finds," 59–60.

43 On the romantic use of these objects, see Hans-Georg von Arburg, "Nation aus dem Sumpf: Pfahlbauergeschichten oder literarische Konstruktionen eines anderen 'Mythos Schweiz,'" in *Schweiz schreiben*, ed. Barkhoff and Heffernan, 117–37. On the status of fragments belonging to, and in fact engendering, art-historical discourses, see Ulrich Pfisterer, "Altamira – oder: Die Anfänge von Kunst und Kunstwissenschaft," in *Vorträge aus dem Warburg-Haus* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2007), 10:13–80.





in a widely reported speech that it was the “last hour” for forming a museum, although he acknowledged that it was a highly delicate issue to determine where it should be and what it should house.<sup>44</sup> The following year, the Federal Council itself made moves to acquire the renowned pile dwelling collection of archaeologist Victor Gross; the implication was that they could not lose yet another collection to the art market and that they would eventually bequeath it to whichever city built the national museum.<sup>45</sup> Most strikingly, and seldom mentioned, is that the main justification for their acquisition of Gross’s collection was based on the pseudoscientific fallacy that Swiss supremacy could be biologically substantiated. In a report of the Federal Council’s meeting on 25 November 1884, the value of the prehistoric skulls in Gross’s possession was characterized by a quotation from Rudolf Virchow, who was one of the fathers of modern pathology and who the year before wrote the preface to the catalogue of Gross’s collection. Gross’s skulls were seen to be “the flesh of our flesh and the blood of our blood.” He continued: “the magnificent skulls found at Auvernier can be shown with honor among the skulls of the cultured peoples” since, in “their form and the details of their formation, they locate themselves alongside the best skulls of the Aryan race.”<sup>46</sup>

In practice, such pseudoscientific thought at the federal level was ultimately as bankrupt as Bern’s attempt to be the inheritor of the Old Confederation; neither provided any substantial justifications for where the national museum should go or why. Bern continued to act as if it were the *de facto* choice because of the *Burgunderbeute* and because of its status as seat of the parliament. Throughout the 1880s and into the early 1890s, the city made significant strides to secure funds and land, establish an advisory board for the Swiss National Museum in Bern, and promote its initiatives by advertising a public competition for architects to submit design proposals for the future museum located in Kirchenfeld, just across the bridge from the medieval city center.<sup>47</sup> In 1890, after the federal government finally put the establishment of the national museum into legislation, an intense competition ensued between Basel, Lucerne, Bern, and Zurich, the last of which was the main contender against Bern because of its savvy self-

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44 Sturzenegger, *Grosse Streit*, 37–38; Zimmermann, “Antiquarische Gesellschaft,” 90–91; Zimmermann, “Chronikalische Notizen,” 371–73.

45 For a brief overview of the Gross acquisition, see Zimmermann, “Chronikalische Notizen,” 373–74 and Sturzenegger, *Grosse Streit*, 40–43. A more substantive discussion, particularly as the collection pertained to national identity, is provided by Karl Zimmermann, “Pfahlbauromantik im Bundeshaus: der Ankauf der ‘Pfahlbausammlung’ von Dr. Victor Gross durch die Eidgenossenschaft im Jahre 1884 und die Frage der Gründung eines schweizerischen National- oder Landesmuseum,” *Berner Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Heimatkunde* 49 (1987): 117–51.

46 Rudolf Virchow, “Preface,” in Victor Gross, *Les Protohelvètes ou les premiers colons sur les bords des lacs Bièvre et de Neuchâtel* (Berlin: A. Asher, 1883), v–vii.

47 Zimmermann, “Chronikalische Notizen,” 377–78.



promotion and because it had hosted the Swiss National Exhibition in 1883.<sup>48</sup> The debates also spilled out into the public forum, with the largest anti-Bern voice in the newspapers being the collector Heinrich Angst, who would eventually become the director of the Swiss National Museum in Zurich. In addition to extolling the strengths of the Zurich collection and its pedagogical merits for the students of the city's vocational schools, he also questioned whether Bern's collection was even fit for the national stage. He asserted that the tapestries and Burgundian trophies were not "antiquities of the fatherland"; they were not made by "us," but were only linked to an important event in Swiss history.<sup>49</sup> After a year of continuous back-and-forth votes in parliament's upper and lower chambers—the Federal Council wanted Bern, the Council of States was set on Zurich—the final vote in a surprise turn went to Zurich, probably based on the Federal Council's concession that the cantons rightfully sought a decentralized government that ensured institutions would be dispersed throughout the country. Indeed, the very procedure for evaluating and voting on the contenders—namely that it had to be a unanimous decision between the Federal Council and cantons—was based on a model similar to how parliament had gone about the decision to locate the Federal Supreme Court in Lausanne.<sup>50</sup> That this decision for a national museum fell somewhat randomly due to matters of bureaucracy and appeasement suggests the degree to which the ideological investments into the past had become fraught and in need of modern parliamentary procedure.

## The Opening of the Bern Historical Museum

Despite Bern's loss, the steering and building committees of the city's in-progress museum, now renamed the Bern Historical Museum rather than the Swiss National Museum, still continued with their building as planned. Head architect André Lambert had proposed his plans in March 1891, just three months before Zurich's surprise vic-

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48 Zurich published its application to the government as a book in order to win public support: *Zürich's Bewerbung: Zürich und das Schweizerische Landes-Museum: den hohen Eidgenössischen Räten gewidmet im Dezember 1890* (Zurich: Hofer & Burger, 1890). For an overview of Zurich's efforts, see Cristina Gutbrod, "Nicht nur im Innern, sondern auch durch sein Äusseres geschichtlich docieren": Gustav Gull's Landesmuseum als bauliche Umsetzung von Johann Rudolf Rahns Verständnis schweizerischer Kunst und Architektur," *Zeitschrift für schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte* 69 (2012): 275–84; Sturzenegger, *Grosse Streit*, 157–61; Peter Ziegler, "Die Antiquarische Gesellschaft als Wegbereiterin kultureller Unternehmungen," *Mitteilungen der Antiquarischen Gesellschaft in Zürich* 51 (1982): 9–43, at 21–22.

49 Heinrich Angst, "Zürich und das schweizerische Nationalmuseum," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 24 February 1888. The questioning of Bern as location was in an anonymous article that Sturzenegger suggests must have been written by Angst: "Zum Bericht der Landesmuseums-Experten," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 4 December 1890; Sturzenegger, *Grosse Streit*, 71–73.

50 Sturzenegger, *Grosse Streit*, 75–77.

tory; his goal was to create a neo-Gothic pastiche inspired by extant structures across the country. These aesthetic borrowings, he argued, bore a “stamp of defiant vigor” befitting “the magnificent landscape within which they stand as well as the indomitable nature of the men who erected them”; their coming together would produce a building “destined to house the memories of our history, the products of national industry, and above all the trophies of patriotic glory” (*die Trophäen vaterländischen Ruhms*).<sup>51</sup> The choice of the word “trophies” was no coincidence, since when it came to the adornment of the main entrance, Lambert envisioned a “mighty painting representing one of the more glorious events of our history,” presumably one of the events that produced the heritage that visitors could find in the museum upon entering.<sup>52</sup>

Starting in 1893, the BHM’s building committee commissioned and evaluated sketches and cartoons from a number of historicist painters so that the entrance would have an impactful effect. But, like in the debates of the previous years, it was not entirely obvious to what kind of patrimony the museum should lay claim. At first, commission members shied away from the types of subject matters that had formed the basis of their national bid. Instead, they considered two drafts depicting the foundation of the city; these were met with lukewarm reception. Lambert, upon seeing the exemplars by Robert von Steiger, called for a more “enlivened image” like the Battle of Laupen against the Hapsburgs and had the artist produce two more drafts of that subject, both of which were also deemed unsatisfactory.<sup>53</sup>

In an unexpectedly quick return to the idea of the Burgundian Wars, Gustav Adolf Karl Closs’s plan to memorialize the Battle of Murten was most enthusiastically received. The committee in fact wanted Closs’s initial sketch to be transformed into something even more monumental, with larger figures of soldiers and a central figure of a knight on horseback.<sup>54</sup> In response to these critiques, Closs fleshed out a new cartoon in watercolor (see Fig. 11.3). Rather than relying on popular medieval models like Schilling’s *Berner Chronik*, whose bloody battle scenes had by then been serially reproduced in various history books and monographs, Closs created a wholly new event perpetuating a version of historicism rooted in the transcending and moralizing of time and place. The Swiss troop, having just ascended a peak overlooking Lake Murten, contemplates their privileged viewpoint, their vanguard commander Hans von Hallwyl already seeming to celebrate the impending victory with his raised sword. With heavy strokes of white sunlight radiating from a dark cloud formation in

51 According to Biland, *BHM Architekturführer*, 11, the primary buildings that inspired Lambert were the Kornhaus in Neuchâtel, Schloss Avenches, the cloister of the abbey of St. George in Stein am Rhein, and the Stockalperpalast in Brig.

52 Biland, *BHM Architekturführer*, 18 gives these quotations without footnotes; I have been unable to locate the original source.

53 “Protokolle 1891–1898,” BHM, Direktionsarchiv 1.3.2, 53 (19 September 1893), 56 (5 December 1893), 58–59 (11 February 1894), and 64 (21 May 1894).

54 “Protokolle 1891–1898,” BHM, Direktionsarchiv, 1.3.2, 64.

the upper left corner, Closs signals victory as a destiny that would illuminate the shadowy, Burgundian-occupied town of Murten below. The building committee, however, had certain reservations about this image. For some, the central knight and his horse read as too mysterious and “foreign” (*fremdartig*); for others, there were complaints about the size of the weapons in the hands of the soldiers (though it is not stated whether they were too big or too small).<sup>55</sup> Resolving such inherent tensions between truth and fiction, familiar and fantastical, seems to have been an impossible task for an institution that by the mid-1890s was keenly aware of the semantics of medievalism and the question of why and for whom the Middle Ages should be appropriated. Three months later, the committee terminated its contract with Closs and employed committee member Léo-Paul Robert to design the main entrance. This was an act of faith since they did not even require a draft or a fixed subject matter before drawing up his contract; immediately after his initial submission of a watercolor draft, the mosaic went into production.<sup>56</sup>

In choosing mosaic as the material for the main entrance, Robert and the building committee in some ways found space for medievalism within their art nouveau vision (see Fig. 11.2). Medieval materials and applied arts techniques were often understood to be effective communicators of modernity’s complexity because they could be industrially produced while also providing an emotional escape from industrialism. Writing in the British *Journal of the Society of Arts* in 1891, Clement John Heaton, who would a few years later be asked to manufacture the glass for the BHM’s mosaic, characterized his vitreous working materials as both ordinary and special, and able to communicate preciousness despite being manufactured in endless quantities.<sup>57</sup>

On the level of symbolism, however, the eager reception of Robert’s vision is just as enigmatic as the mosaic itself. Surmounted by a Latin inscription describing the transitory nature of life and fame—“thus passes the glory of the world” (*sic transit gloria mundi*)—the scene unfolding below thematizes the progression of time as cause for both hope and fear.<sup>58</sup> Five personifications of the main historical epochs in Bern (prehistory, antiquity, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Enlightenment) have

55 “Protokolle 1891–1898,” BHM, Direktionsarchiv, 1.3.2, 65–66 (18 September 1894), 74 (5 March 1895).

56 Perhaps this trust was because Robert was already working with Clement Heaton on the mosaics of the central staircase at the Musée d’Art et d’Histoire in Neuchâtel and the committee had observed his drafts or work. On the commission being given to Robert, see “Protokolle 1891–1898,” BHM, Direktionsarchiv, 1.3.2, 84 (20 June 1895), 85 (10 September 1895).

57 Clement Heaton, “The Use of Cloisonné for Decoration in Ancient & Modern Times,” *Journal of the Society of Arts* 39, no. 2002 (1891): 375–90, at 387.

58 The Latin phrase was used in papal coronations since the fifteenth century, but the reasoning behind its use as the mosaic’s inscription is unclear and, to my knowledge, also not mentioned in the textual record. We can presume that the public took this phrase literally within the context of the mosaic itself. German publishing house Karl Baedeker, which published highly popular guidebooks of European destinations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, described the mosaic quite plainly: “Above the main entrance is a large mosaic by P. Robert, intended to represent the aims of the mu-

wreaked havoc on the world, whose horizon line is filled with smoke and fire and whose base is a frieze of the skulls of the deceased. The past's darkness is illuminated by an elderly female allegory of History, who holds a lamp to see it and write her findings in her book. History's younger, alluring counterpart, Poetry, transfigures the solemn facts of the past through her art; she rests her lyre and throws pansies across the span of place and time.

Robert's mosaic in some ways seems to provide a self-reflective commentary on the issues of the previous decades about reclaiming the past. History is shaped not only by victory but also by violence and, in the process, many people and objects are memorialized and others forgotten. The past and its objects are not inherently visible and valuable, let alone artful; objects must be defined as such and, for that reason, any period of time can become laden with meaning through the presentism of history-writing and poetry. Robert's symbolism quite sophisticatedly and dialectically praises and undoes the power of symbols, but it also invests in the power of a particular definition of art and artfulness that did not always seek to dignify. Most obviously, the ethnographic objects that the BHM was aggressively collecting at the turn of the twentieth century seldom fit into Eurocentric ideals of the past and were more often used to illustrate "art's" counterpart. Rather than providing a more encompassing view of how and why to recuperate the past, the mosaic in many ways suggests the rise of a new and equally limiting criterion: a notion of artistic appreciation shared by the citizens of Bern and Switzerland, who would still use some objects to define themselves and take others as tools against which they could elevate themselves.

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seum . . . Over the frieze is the inscription: Sic transit gloria mundi." Karl Baedeker, *Switzerland and the Adjacent Portions of Italy, Savoy, and Tyrol* (Leipzig: Karl Baedeker, 1903), 281.

Iñigo Salto Santamaría

## Mosan Art, German Impediments: A Transnational Exhibition Network in Post–World War II Europe

The exhibition of Mosan art that opened in Liège in September 1951 offered an unprecedented assembly of objects created in the Meuse Valley between the first century BCE and the eighteenth century CE.<sup>1</sup> The diocese of Liège, located at the crossroads of the modern states of Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands, was a prolific artistic center during the Middle Ages. Fittingly, the medieval section, on view in the cloister of St. Paul's Cathedral, was the core of the exhibition; it displayed a star-studded selection of ivory carvings, goldsmith works, manuscripts, and sculptures from museums and libraries all over western Europe (Fig. 12.1).



**Fig. 12.1:** Exhibition view of *Art mosan et arts anciens du Pays de Liège*, Liège, Cloître de Saint-Paul, 1951. Photo: © Province de Liège-Musée de la Vie wallonne, Agence Robyns, bt- 01262-17747.

<sup>1</sup> *Art mosan et arts anciens du Pays de Liège* (Liège: Cloître de Saint-Paul and Musée des Beaux-Arts, 1951).

A few months later, in December 1951, the show traveled to Paris's Musée des Arts Décoratifs where it opened under the title *Trésors d'art de la vallée de la Meuse* (Art Treasures from the Meuse Valley).<sup>2</sup> In February 1952, a reduced selection of the exhibition's medieval section traveled again, this time to the Museum Boymans (the current Museum Boijmans van Beuningen) in Rotterdam, which hosted the show as *Kunst der Maasvallei* (Art from the Meuse Valley).<sup>3</sup>

It was no isolated occurrence of a transnational traveling exhibition. Large cultural enterprises bringing artworks from different institutions together had been commonplace in Europe since the early nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> The aftermath of the Second World War, however, saw an unprecedented number of such temporary exhibitions, which were made possible by the dispersed status of many European museum collections in the years following the end of the conflict. A key catalyst for these temporary exhibitions was the desire to (re)unite objects scattered across different institutions.

Yet art-historical objectives notwithstanding, temporary exhibitions often had ulterior motives of a political nature, ranging from gestures of goodwill between museums and nations to the more calculated use of objects to advance particular diplomatic agendas. This was the case with the displays of the art of the Meuse Valley, the subject of this essay. Already in 1952, the art historian Hanns Swarzenski described these shows as "symbols and products of our spiritual and political situation."<sup>5</sup> More recently, Sophie Balace has argued that the Mosan exhibitions should be understood in the context of the material, economic, political, and philosophical reconstruction climate of postwar Europe. That climate prompted countries to search for a common identity; it was one often based on shared medieval roots.<sup>6</sup> Exhibitions such as the 1951–52 shows of Mosan objects used the art of the distant past to showcase the interconnected character of modern countries and as a model for the ongoing development of European economic and political unity.

Nevertheless, the postwar period was not only a forward-looking era fostering understanding between peoples and nations who had recently been in conflict. It was also a period during which the horrors of fascism, totalitarianism, and war that had ravaged Europe since the early twentieth century were processed through trials, reparations, and manifold diplomatic undertakings. By analyzing select academic and exhibition dynamics related to Mosan art both before and after the Second World War, I argue that the Meuse Valley exhibitions were not only an expression of the ongoing European integration process but were also anchored in historiographic debates and cultural diplomacy related to Germany's pre- and postwar political situation.

2 *Trésors d'art de la Vallée de la Meuse* (Paris: Musée des Arts Décoratifs, 1951).

3 *Kunst der Maasvallei* (Rotterdam: Museum Boymans, 1952).

4 On the history of temporary exhibitions of Old Masters, see Francis Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum: Old Master Paintings and the Rise of the Art Exhibition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

5 Hanns Swarzenski, "The Italian and Mosan Shows in the Light of the Great Art Exhibitions," *Burlington Magazine* 95, no. 602 (May 1953): 151–57, at 151.

6 Sophie Balace, "Historiographie de l'art mosan" (PhD diss., University of Liège, 2009), 213.

To reach this conclusion, this essay is structured as a three-part historiographic journey through the display of Mosan art. First, a 1920s polemic fueled by German scholars and its reiteration in the context of the Second World War will be placed in the larger context of the pre-1945 study of Mosan artifacts. Second, two postwar exhibitions of medieval art will be presented to visualize the development of German cultural diplomacy of the late 1940s as the predecessor to the 1950s Mosan exhibitions that are the article's main subject. Finally, the traveling shows of art treasures from the Meuse Valley will be contrasted to these preceding case studies, with the aim to highlight the German role in the initiation of these postwar cultural enterprises. The Shrine of St. Heribert, a twelfth-century reliquary held at the homonymous church on the right bank of the Rhine in Cologne-Deutz, provides a common thread linking these tumultuous but intertwined academic and display dynamics. This essay is thus a contribution to the growing literature that looks at exhibitions and museum display, as well as the circulation of artworks, through the lens of modern politics.<sup>7</sup>

## Mosan Art Before 1945—Academia, Exhibitions, and Politics

To assess the German ramifications of postwar Mosan exhibitions, it is important to understand the influence that modern politics had on the early twentieth-century reception of Mosan works of art, including the Heribert Shrine. The early historiography of Mosan art is strongly linked to several shows of decorative arts that took place during the second half of the nineteenth century. These exhibitions laid the groundwork for the scholarly recognition of the specific style that had developed in the Meuse Valley during the High Middle Ages. Bringing key artworks scattered across Belgian churches and museums to Malines (1864), Brussels (1880), and Liège (1881) allowed experts to

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<sup>7</sup> Among these can be highlighted: Matilde Arnoux, "L'exposition des primitifs allemands au Musée de Jeu de Paume en 1950: Symbole de la réconciliation culturelle franco-allemande," in *In die Freiheit geworfen: Positionen zur deutsch-französischen Kunstgeschichte nach 1945*, ed. Martin Schieder and Isabelle Ewig (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2006): 49–66; Matilde Cartolari, *Ambassadors of Beauty. Italian Old Master Exhibitions and Fascist Cultural Diplomacy 1930–1940* (Berlin: De Gruyter, forthcoming); Victor Claass, "Les ambassadeurs muets: Usage, exil et tournée de tableaux français aux Amériques (1939–1947)," *Revue de l'art* 215, no. 1 (2022): 38–51; Michela Passini, "Historical Narratives of the Nation and the Instrumentalization of Museums: Exhibiting National Art Histories in the Jeu de Paume Museum between the Wars," in *Great Narratives of the Past Traditions and Revisions in National Museums*, ed. Dominique Poulot, Felicity Bodenstein, and José María Lanzarote Guiral (Linköping: Linköping University Press, 2012), 457–66, [https://ep.liu.se/konferensartikel.aspx?series=&issue=78&Article\\_No=28](https://ep.liu.se/konferensartikel.aspx?series=&issue=78&Article_No=28).

closely study and compare objects.<sup>8</sup> Following the 1881 show, Charles de Linas (1812–87) was the first historian to refer to this group of objects as “Mosan art.”<sup>9</sup>

The groundbreaking scholarly publication that put this artistic region on the international academic map was *Deutsche Schmelzarbeiten des Mittelalters* (German Enamels of the Middle Ages) by Otto von Falke (1862–1942), published in the wake of the art-historical exhibition held in Düsseldorf in 1902. In its pages, von Falke, at the time director of the Museum of Decorative Arts in Cologne, undertook an extensive survey of German medieval enamels displayed in the show while also taking into consideration “foreign monuments.”<sup>10</sup> Adopting a comparative approach, von Falke produced an array of attributions that for the first time differentiated Mosan goldsmith work from that of the Rhineland (previously, these objects had all been grouped under the label “Rhenish-Mosan art”). Von Falke’s book shaped future studies dedicated to the arts of the Meuse Valley as art historians either corroborated or rejected his propositions, something they did increasingly along national lines.

In this publication, which appeared in 1904, von Falke declared Godefroid de Claire the creator of the Shrine of St. Heribert (Fig. 12.2), thus claiming this artifact for the Mosan school.<sup>11</sup> In the 1920s, several German academics questioned his attribution.<sup>12</sup> Joseph Braun and Hermann Beenken led the way by discussing von Falke’s thesis in prominent academic publications. Braun considered the use of names to which no artifact could unanimously be attributed “trivial for the history of goldsmiths’ art.” Holding the view that the Heribert Shrine had been created in Cologne, he argued further that von Falke’s attribution to Godefroid was “groundless.”<sup>13</sup> Beenken likewise declared von Falke’s attribution “untenable” because of the superior quality of the Deutz shrine’s figures in comparison to the Shrine of St. Mengold at Huy, also attributed to Godefroid de Claire. In contrast to Braun, who only theorized about the shrine’s place of creation, Beenken surmised that the artist was probably “German by

8 For an overview of the history of exhibitions of Mosan art, see Balace, “Historiographie,” 194–225.

9 Sophie Balace, “L’art mosan: Regard historiographique,” in “L’art mosan (1000–1250): Un art entre Seine et Rhin? Réflexions, bilans, perspectives,” ed. Sophie Balace, Mathieu Piavaux, and Benoit van den Bossche, special issue, *Bulletin des Musées royaux d’Art et d’Histoire, Bruxelles* 85–86 (2014–15): 9–22, at 12.

10 Otto von Falke and Heinrich Frauberger, eds., *Deutsche Schmelzarbeiten des Mittelalters und andere Kunstwerke der kunsthistorischen Ausstellung zu Düsseldorf 1902* (Frankfurt am Main: Baer, 1904): unpaginated foreword.

11 Von Falke, “Deutsche Schmelzarbeiten,” 61, 84–87. On the historiography of Godefroid de Claire (ca. 1100–ca. 1173), also known as Godefroid de Huy (a city located 25 kilometers west of Liège), see Balace, “Historiographie,” 238–64.

12 On this art-historical debate, called the “shrine war” by Sophie Balace, see Balace, “Historiographie,” 249.

13 Joseph Braun, *Meisterwerke der deutschen Goldschmiedekunst der vorgotischen Zeit*, vol. 1, 9.–12. Jahrhundert (Munich: Riehn & Reusch, 1922), 12–13.





**Fig. 12.2:** Shrine of St. Heribert, Cologne-Deutz. Photo from von Falke and Frauberger, *Deutsche Schmelzarbeiten*.

birth.”<sup>14</sup> Two years later, in 1926, he again questioned Godefroid’s importance and most of von Falke’s attributions. Based on a comparison with the Golden Altar Frontal at Aachen Cathedral, Beenken now identified that city as the source for the style of the Shrine of St. Heribert.<sup>15</sup>

A few years later, the Belgian art historian Marcel Laurent denounced Beenken’s “aggressive tone,” criticizing how he had underestimated both the achievements of Godefroid de Claire and von Falke’s attributions.<sup>16</sup> Laurent’s position makes clear that, as inter-European rivalries in the aftermath of the First World War became more acrimonious, divisions in the scholarship of the 1920s concerning Romanesque artifacts created in the Rhenish-Mosan region should also be perceived as nationally motivated. Taking into consideration the post-World War I climate in Europe and the tense Belgo-German relationships after the German occupation of Belgium adds a

<sup>14</sup> Hermann Beenken, *Romanische Skulptur in Deutschland, 11.–12. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1924), 216, no. 108.

<sup>15</sup> Hermann Beenken, “Schreine und Schranken,” *Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* (1926): 65–107, at 79–83.

<sup>16</sup> Marcel Laurent, “Art rhénan, art mosan et art byzantin, La Bible de Stavelot,” *Byzantion* 6 (1931): 75–98, at 82.

layer of political meaning to scholarly debates and helps to put them into a broader perspective that provides a more nuanced view of what seem excessively belligerent disagreements.

Following the 1918 armistice that ended the First World War, the Rhineland was occupied by the United Kingdom, Belgium, and France.<sup>17</sup> In 1924, during the Allied occupation of the area, which had been part of the Liège diocese until the sixteenth century, an exhibition of older art from the region of Liège was mounted in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris.<sup>18</sup> The diplomatic character of this enterprise in the context of the Franco-Belgian friendship prompted the Musées royaux du Cinquantiennaire in Brussels to loan many of their major medieval artifacts for what was the first Mosan show to take place outside of Belgium. These objects had not been present at any previous exhibition but had been important to von Falke's arguments.<sup>19</sup> In that sense, one could consider the 1924 show as a crystallization of von Falke's 1904 attributions, physically corroborated by first-class masterpieces from Belgian and French institutions displayed in an internationally prominent venue. Laurent, who would in the following years passionately defend the pro-Mosan position against the arguments of Braun and Beenken, specifically declared in the catalog that the Heribert Shrine was Godefroid de Claire's masterpiece and that his art influenced Rhenish goldsmiths, not the other way around.<sup>20</sup> The catalog did, however, abstain from an overtly aggressive tone; if it had called special attention to Braun and Beenken's views, it could have conveyed anti-German sentiments. As such, the Parisian exhibition constitutes a prime example of the use of medieval artifacts for modern political agendas and of scholarly endeavors seized as an opportunity for a diplomatic gesture between allies.

In the occupied Rhineland, meanwhile, the medieval past was also being instrumentalized for political purposes. The 1925 *Millennium of the Rhineland* exhibition held in Cologne was organized to commemorate an alleged thousand-year political link between the region and the German Empire, an event dated to the province's integration into the Reich under King Henry I.<sup>21</sup> The exhibition acted as a sort of pre-celebration of

17 On the occupation of the Rhineland and the appropriation of history for propaganda purposes, see Franziska Wein, *Deutschlands Strom, Frankreichs Grenze: Geschichte und Propaganda am Rhein 1919–1930* (Essen: Klartext, 1992).

18 *L'Art ancien au pays de Liège* (Paris: Musée des Arts Décoratifs, 1924).

19 Balace, "Historiographie," 208.

20 *L'Art ancien au pays de Liège* (1924), 26.

21 *Katalog der Jahrtausend-Ausstellung der Rheinlande in Köln 1925* (Cologne: Messe Köln, 1925). See Cornelia Foerster, "Zur Problematik kulturhistorischer Ausstellungen am Rhein. Jahrtausendausstellung Köln 1925, Gesolei Düsseldorf 1926, Stadtjubiläum Düsseldorf 1988," in *Festschrift für Gerhard Bott zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Ulrich Schneider (Darmstadt: Anthes, 1987), 159–68, at 159; Hans M. Schmidt, "Die Jahrtausend-Ausstellungen in Aachen, Düsseldorf, Köln sowie Koblenz und Mainz. Zielsetzung, Konzeption und Resonanz," in *Jahrtausendfeiern und Befreiungsfeiern im Rheinland. Zur politischen Festkultur 1925 und 1930*, ed. Gertrude Cepl-Kaufmann (Essen: Klartext, 2009), 229–62, at 243–59.

Cologne's agreed-upon liberation from foreign occupation in January 1926, conveniently using the expedient of a historical anniversary to avoid objections from the Occupation administration.<sup>22</sup> As part of the extensive fair infrastructure built in Cologne-Deutz, a section of the *Millennium* exhibition was devoted to a retrospective of Rhenish art. Notable artworks of the region, such as Stefan Lochner's celebrated Three Magi Altarpiece from Cologne Cathedral, were put on display to showcase the achievements of Rhenish painting, sculpture, and decorative arts.<sup>23</sup>



**Fig. 12.3:** Exhibition view of *Millennium of the Rhineland*, Cologne, 1925. Photo: © Rheinisches Bildarchiv Köln, rba\_010393.

One room of the exhibition was dedicated to Romanesque shrines, with major pieces from Cologne, Aachen, Siegburg, and other parts of the Rhineland, including Nicholas of Verdun's Shrine of the Three Kings from Cologne Cathedral and the Shrine of St. Heribert (Fig. 12.3). In contrast to most other shrines listed as "works from Cologne," the

<sup>22</sup> Tilman Koops, "Die rheinische Tausendjahrfeier 1925," in *Auf der Suche nach regionaler Identität: Geschichtskultur zwischen Kaiserreich und Nationalsozialismus* (Bergisch Gladbach: Thomas-Morus-Akademie Bensberg, 1997), 73–88, at 76. See also Foerster, "Zur Problematik," 160.

<sup>23</sup> *Katalog der Jahrtausend-Ausstellung der Rheinlande* (1925), 202, no. 42.

origin of the Heribert Shrine was not mentioned in the catalog.<sup>24</sup> It is likely that giving it a Cologne provenance would have further fueled an already very politicized exhibition. Instead, this section's curator, Fritz Witte, underlined in various publications the complexity of the attribution question. Regarding the Heribert Shrine, he wrote then that "the last word has not been spoken" (although he had no issue in repeating von Falke's attribution to Godefroid de Claire in an article three years later).<sup>25</sup> Hermann Schnitzler (1905–76), who would take on Witte's position as director of the Schnütgen Museum in Cologne in the 1950s and was therefore involved in the postwar exhibitions of Mosan art discussed in this essay, highlighted in his 1934 dissertation the extent to which a definitive attribution of a shrine "in which Belgian traits mix with Rhenish ones" was impossible; he pleaded for a solution that comprised both the Mosan roots of its style and the possibility that it was created by Cologne goldsmiths.<sup>26</sup>

The two 1924–25 exhibitions in Paris and Cologne demonstrate that Belgium and Germany mobilized medieval objects to advance modern political agendas. For the Belgians, their first-class loans to the Mosan show in Paris representing their culture served as a diplomatic gesture; for Cologne, by contrast, artifacts such as the Heribert Shrine celebrated both the Rhineland's participation in the German nation and the upcoming liberation after years of political and military occupation. Nevertheless, the exhibition committees on both sides refrained from actively exploiting the scholarly debate around contested attributions, aware that this would inevitably antagonize the other party.

The fate of western Europe in the 1930s and 1940s altered these earlier perspectives, shaping the 1950s Mosan shows that lie at the heart of my discussion. A decade after the closure of the 1925 *Millennium* exhibition, Nazism triumphed in Germany; with it came unprecedented propaganda measures that capitalized, among other things, on the medieval past.<sup>27</sup> In the winter of 1939–40, following the start of the Second World War but preceding the invasion of France in May 1940, Pierre Francastel, an associate professor of art history at the University of Strasbourg who was then in exile in Clermont-Ferrand, lectured on the role of art history as a tool of German propaganda. His lectures were published in 1945 as *L'histoire de l'art, instrument de la propagande germanique* (Art History as a Tool of Germanic Propaganda). Through several case studies focusing on mostly medieval art-historical styles and cultural land-

24 *Katalog der Jahrtausend-Ausstellung der Rheinlande* (1925), 161, no. 75.

25 *Katalog der Jahrtausend-Ausstellung der Rheinlande* (1925), 35; Fritz Witte, *Die Wienhausener Teppiche und der Schrein des Hl. Heribert* (Cologne: Bachem, 1928), 15.

26 Hermann Schnitzler, *Die Goldschmiedeplastik der Aachener Schreinswerkstatt. Beiträge zur Entwicklung der Goldschmiedekunst des Rhein-Maasgebietes in der romanischen Zeit* (Düren: Danielewski, 1934), 8, 32.

27 Bruno Reudenbach and Meike Steinkamp, eds., *Mittelalterbilder im Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2013).

scapes, Francastel looked for the sources of Nazi art-historical propaganda in the intellectual and scholarly developments of early twentieth-century Germany.<sup>28</sup>

One chapter of Francastel's book was titled "Liège and Cologne: The Mosan Problem." Tracing the historiographic development of Mosan art since the nineteenth century, Francastel praised von Falke's work and thoroughly discussed the 1920s polemic started by the articles of Braun and Beenken. This led him to dissect Beenken's "arbitrary and tendentious" methodology and to cast the German scholar's doubts about Godefroid de Claire's authorship as a blatant negation of Mosan art.<sup>29</sup> According to Francastel, Germany's "eternal goal" was a form of cultural seizure: a theft of other nations' "conscience of their past greatness."<sup>30</sup> Francastel's views on the "shrine war" focused on Braun and Beenken's articles while ignoring other more nuanced views (such as Witte's and Schnitzler's). The publication of this essay in 1945 was thus a link between the polemical, belligerent narrative of the 1920s and the post-1945 reckoning with Nazi Germany's expansionist policies, a process that would motivate several exhibitions on Mosan art in the aftermath of the conflict.

## Touring German Collections in the Immediate Postwar Era (1945–50)

The end of the Second World War left a ravaged continent behind, with most museum collections still in the evacuation facilities where they were stored in the months following August 1939. Thousands of objects scattered around repositories and collecting points progressively found their way back to their home institutions, often after a stop in temporary exhibitions.<sup>31</sup> Among other examples of a complex transnational cultural and diplomatic network, the Musée de Cluny's Lady and the Unicorn tapestries traveled to New York and Chicago while many of the early Christian treasures of

<sup>28</sup> Pierre Francastel, *L'histoire de l'art, instrument de la propagande germanique* (Paris: Librairie de Médicis, 1945).

<sup>29</sup> Francastel, *L'histoire de l'art*, 86–87.

<sup>30</sup> Francastel, *L'histoire de l'art*, 15. For a contextualization of Francastel's publication in the early months of the Second World War, see Mathilde Arnoux, "Pierre Francastel, *L'histoire de l'art* instrument de la propagande germanique, Paris, 1945, p. 4 et p. 7–12," in *Perspectives croisées: La critique d'art franco-allemande*, ed. Mathilde Arnoux, Thomas W. Gaehtgens, and Friedericke Kitschen (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 2009), 505–13, at 513. See also Balace, "Historiographie," 256.

<sup>31</sup> Swarzenski, "The Italian and Mosan Shows," 151. On the evacuation and return of cultural heritage in Europe, see Michel Rayssac, *L'exode des musées: Histoires des œuvres d'art sous l'Occupation* (Paris: Payot, 2007).

Monza Cathedral were brought to Lucerne and Zurich.<sup>32</sup> Such postwar shows can, like the 1924 Parisian exhibition of Mosan art, be viewed as diplomatic gestures of goodwill for the lending nations and as prestigious events in the hosting countries. But unlike that show's treatment of von Falke's pro-Mosan position, these later exhibitions were rarely interested in advancing specific scholarly positions. They instead followed traditional organizational models based on national/nationalistic characteristics.

The wide-ranging destruction of many museum facilities meant that, from an early stage, objects in Allied-occupied Germany's museums were among the most affected by practical challenges. This, in turn, fueled many domestic and international exhibition projects. The 1945 transport to the United States of 202 paintings from the collection of the Berlin museums exemplifies how the war's political aftermath and the dispersed character of European cultural heritage fostered spectacular temporary exhibitions within a more or less pronounced diplomatic framework.<sup>33</sup> Three years after they were controversially taken from the Wiesbaden collecting point to Washington, D.C., these pictures were put on display at the National Gallery of Art and were later, despite the conservation-related fears of the curators in Berlin, sent across the United States. Once the paintings returned to Europe, another series of exhibitions ensued, lasting until 1952. As John Walker, chief curator at the National Gallery put it: "The German curators said any tour would be a disaster. The moment the pictures got back to Germany the same curators arranged to send them on tour around Europe."<sup>34</sup> Sending the collection on the road in Europe was, in fact, a decision negotiated between ambassadors and foreign ministers rather than by curators.<sup>35</sup> This tug-of-war between museum and government officials displays concerns about the impact of massive transport operations on the objects' physical integrity. It also indicates how the moral and economic benefits to be gained from loan shows placed them firmly in the context of postwar reparations (earnings usually benefitted the lending country).

The same curatorial and diplomatic dynamics can be detected in two series of German exhibitions of the late 1940s that featured medieval decorative arts, including Mosan artifacts, and were designed to advance the cultural agenda of the newly founded Federal Republic of Germany abroad. Both illustrate a gradual change in the country's cultural diplomacy, which went from nationally centered to European oriented. The project originated in a request by the Belgian government to receive an

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<sup>32</sup> *French Tapestries* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1947) and *Kunstschätze der Lombardei. 500 vor Christus – 1800 nach Christus* (Zurich: Kunsthhaus, 1948).

<sup>33</sup> Peter Jonathan Bell and Kristi A. Nelson, eds., *The Berlin Masterpieces in America: Paintings, Politics, and the Monuments Men* (Cincinnati: Cincinnati Art Museum, 2020).

<sup>34</sup> John Walker to Thomas Carr Howe, 1950, Washington, D.C., Archives of American Art, Thomas Carr Howe Papers, 3/6.

<sup>35</sup> This was the case for the 1950 exhibition of the Berlin masterpieces in Paris, part of the European tour referred to by John Walker. Robert Schuman to André François-Poncet, 3 October 1950, La Cour-neuve, Centre des Archives diplomatiques (hereafter cited as CAD), 554 INVA 1404.

exhibition of masterpieces coming from the bordering British occupation zone that encompassed, among other territories, Cologne and the Rhineland.<sup>36</sup> Named *Treasures of the German Middle Ages*, this show was supervised on the Belgian side by Émile Langui. As an advisor for artistic propaganda at the Belgian Ministry of Education, he played a central role in Belgium's postwar cultural diplomacy and was involved in many of the exhibitions I discuss.<sup>37</sup> *Treasures of the German Middle Ages* was hosted at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels from April to June 1949. David Cornelis Röell, director of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, was involved from the beginning and his presence would lead to the transfer of the exhibition to the Netherlands with a new title: *From the Treasures of the Middle Ages: Art from Northwestern Germany from Charlemagne to Charles V*.<sup>38</sup>

The German team in charge of the Brussels and Amsterdam shows decided to focus their attention on Rhenish sculpture and decorative arts; they secured impressive loans from major church treasuries in the region (for example, the Golden Madonna from Essen) as well as extraordinary artifacts like the Romanesque doors from Cologne's St. Maria im Kapitol. The Heribert Shrine, which had been at the heart of the 1920s "shrine war," was also lent for both venues. Its front side was even featured in the exhibition posters, making it one of the most prominent artworks on view (Fig. 12.4).<sup>39</sup> The section on goldsmiths' work in the catalog, edited by Hermann Schnitzler, referred to the shrine as a "masterpiece of the Rhine-Meuse region" and maintained that Godefroid de Claire was in all probability one of the artists involved in its creation.<sup>40</sup>

Many churches that had previously refused to loan items from their collections to temporary exhibitions here made an exception to foster the "mutual appreciation among nations."<sup>41</sup> They were probably motivated by the high political value attached to the whole enterprise by the government of North Rhine-Westphalia, the German state that was home to most of the lending institutions.<sup>42</sup> Given the exceptional transport challenges and display conditions, the lenders required that the Belgian and Dutch organizers insure the objects for astounding amounts; in the case of the Brus-

36 Minutes of a Denkmal- und Museumsrat Nordwestdeutschland meeting, 29–30 September 1948, Brauweiler, Archiv des Landschaftsverbandes Rheinland (hereafter cited as LVR), 28352.

37 *Trésors du Moyen Âge allemand* (Brussels: Palais des Beaux-Arts, 1949).

38 *Uit de Schatkamers der Middeleeuwen. Kunst uit Noord-West-Duitsland van Karel de Grote tot Karel de Vijfde* (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 1949).

39 Joseph Hoster to Josef Frings, 29 November 1951, Cologne, Historisches Archiv des Erzbistums Köln (hereafter cited as HAEK), CR II 27.24, 5/185.

40 *Trésors du Moyen Âge allemand* (1949), 16 and 21, no. 62. This diplomatic solution to the attribution debates is one that Schnitzler had already argued for in his 1934 dissertation.

41 Josef Frings to Franz Wolff-Metternich, 26 February 1949, LVR, 28352.

42 Report on the Belgian exhibition by Franz Wolff-Metternich, February 1949, LVR, 28352. The amount would be equivalent to about \$120 million in 2022.



**Fig. 12.4:** Exhibition view of *From the Treasuries of the Middle Ages: Art from Northwestern Germany from Charlemagne to Charles V* showing the Shrine of St. Heribert; Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, 1949. Photo: Rijksmuseum Afdeling Beeld, HA-0012267 (public domain).

sels show, the total value reached \$10 million.<sup>43</sup> Some of the exhibition's most valuable goldsmith works, such as the Golden Madonna and the Shrine of St. Heribert, were each insured for \$500,000. These were astronomical sums for the time, and they significantly increased the exhibitions' costs, eventually turning them into financial failures.<sup>44</sup>

The insurance fees, combined with a low number of visitors, meant that the financial expectations in Brussels and Amsterdam were not met, even if the exhibitions were praised for their "moral success."<sup>45</sup> For the organizers, the mild public interest partly resulted from the specialized nature of the so-called minor arts, seemingly not as attractive to the public as Old Master paintings.<sup>46</sup> The titles of the shows, which underlined their German character (albeit only in reference to the artifacts' current

<sup>43</sup> Robert Giron to Pierre Verlet, 18 April 1950, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, Archives nationales, (hereafter cited as AN), 20150337/373.

<sup>44</sup> Pierre Verlet to Philippe Erlanger, quoting Robert Giron, 22 January 1951, AN, 20150337/373.

<sup>45</sup> Report on the Belgian exhibition by Franz Wolff-Metternich, 25 July 1949, LVR, 28354.

<sup>46</sup> Robert Giron to Pierre Verlet, 18 April 1950, AN, 20150337/373.



provenance, not their place of creation), might also have affected the poor reception. Just seven years before, the Nazis had put the medieval past on display in Brussels at the exhibition *Deutsche Größe* (German Greatness), a traveling cultural-historical show that prominently drew on large-scale facsimiles and architectural reconstructions to celebrate German history and culture.<sup>47</sup> Was it too early for an exhibition such as the 1949 *Treasures of the German Middle Ages*, however spectacularly stocked with masterpieces, to take place in the recently liberated Low Countries?

A contemporaneous cultural enterprise revealed another way to display medieval artifacts and, arguably, in a timelier way. West German libraries organized a loan exhibition of medieval manuscripts and decorative arts to thank Switzerland for book donations in the immediate postwar era that had been organized by several Swiss cities to replace volumes destroyed during the war. Presented at the Kunstmuseum in Bern from July to December 1949, *Kunst des frühen Mittelalters* (Art of the Early Middle Ages) was the outcome of this diplomatic effort.<sup>48</sup> Its political motivation, though not expressly mentioned in the official publications, was actively underlined in organizational reports written at the exhibition's close: "But the show also fulfilled its political task to the full. It was intended not only to strengthen the bond between Germany and Switzerland, but also to show and promote the cultural unity of the whole of Europe."<sup>49</sup> Willibald Sauerländer has argued that the concept of the *Abendland* (the Occident) became for German medievalists the new focus for what had been a nationally-centered discipline. The Bern show can be considered as the first sign that this emphasis on the European West started to flow from the world of German academia into the realm of public exhibitions.<sup>50</sup>

It is for this reason that the West German provenance of the objects was not the guiding thread of the show. Instead, the artifacts and manuscripts on view showcased the geographic and stylistic diversity of the art of the Middle Ages across the European continent. Even if the show was broadly structured into chronological periods, the curators did not shy away from placing objects "of similar nature together."<sup>51</sup> For

47 William Diebold, "A Living Source of our Civilization: The Exhibition *Deutsche Groesse/Grandeur de l'Allemagne/Duitsche Grootheid* in Brussels, 1942," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 65 (2015): 292–319.

48 *Kunst des frühen Mittelalters* (Bern: Kunstmuseum, 1949). The exhibition was scheduled to run until 31 October 1949, but was extended until 31 December 1949; see the undated exhibition brochures, Bern, Kunstmuseum Bern, C 0117 31.

49 Report on the exhibition *Kunst des frühen Mittelalters*, 18 November 1949, Munich, Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, MK 51507.

50 Willibald Sauerländer, "Von den 'Sonderleistungen Deutscher Kunst' zur 'Ars Sacra': Kunstgeschichte in Deutschland 1945–1950," in *Wissenschaft im geteilten Deutschland: Restauration oder Neubeginn nach 1945*, ed. Walter H. Pehle and Peter Sillem (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1992), 177–90, at 179–81.

51 Otto Homburger (?), *Kunst des Mittelalters. Zur Ausstellung in Berner Museum*, undated draft, Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Nachlass Otto Homburger, 9 (1).

example, in the central room at the beginning of the exhibition, masterpieces of Ottonian sculpture were displayed next to late antique and Byzantine ivories to emphasize how manuscript illuminators used a variety of models for inspiration. In the Mosan section, manuscripts from the Meuse Valley were juxtaposed with an enamel attributed to “Master Godefroid de Claire from Huy” and other plaques assigned to Cologne and attributed to Nicholas of Verdun and his followers.<sup>52</sup> Instead of framing Mosan artifacts as a style of a particular nation or region (as in the 1924 and 1925 exhibitions) or in a setting that highlighted their German provenance (such as the 1949 shows in Brussels and Amsterdam), the Bern show offered a multifaceted, transnational perspective on the Middle Ages. Thanks to this viewpoint, the interconnected character of the Rhine-Meuse artistic styles could be highlighted; more so, they could be used to political ends in a German exhibition on view abroad.

## The Mosan Exhibitions of 1951–1952

Just a few years later, the multifaceted and evolving framework of shows featuring medieval decorative arts from German institutions provided the basis for a large Mosan exhibition of an unprecedented international character, one that drew on pre-war scholarly narratives as well as on postwar West German exhibition politics. In the early postwar years, Belgium’s cultural diplomatic efforts had mainly focused on Flemish paintings. Exhibitions such as *From Jan van Eyck to Rubens* at the Rijksmuseum or *Flemish Primitives* at the Orangerie in Paris promoted Belgian culture and collections abroad in a period generally characterized by nationally oriented shows.<sup>53</sup> But the changed political environment of Western Europe in the late 1940s prompted Belgian officials to put other artistic periods and media forward to stress the intertwined character of Western Europe (instead of focusing on a national school). As my final case study illustrates, the medieval diocese of Liège, located at the intersection of modern European nations, perfectly suited the display of Mosan artifacts for timely political goals.

The exhibition *Art mosan et arts anciens du Pays de Liège* (Mosan and Ancient Arts from the Liège Region) was planned as a Franco-Belgian enterprise from an early stage; as in 1924, the Musée des Arts Décoratifs was secured as the exhibition’s Parisian venue. The show was locally championed by the historian Jean Lejeune, a specialist in Liège and Walloon history who had spent the wartime occupation period in

<sup>52</sup> *Kunst des frühen Mittelalters* (1949), 119, no. 340, and 120, no. 346.

<sup>53</sup> *Van Jan van Eyck tot Rubens* (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 1946); *Les primitifs flamands* (Paris: Musée de l’Orangerie, 1947).

prisoner camps in Germany and Poland.<sup>54</sup> In 1948, Lejeune completed a thesis on Liège during the High Middle Ages in which he subscribed to a view on Germany's appropriation of other nations' past reminiscent of Francastel's *Art History as a Tool of Germanic Propaganda*.<sup>55</sup>

The organizing committee of *Mosan and Ancient Arts* was able to obtain Mosan masterpieces not only from local museums and religious establishments in Liège but also from all over Wallonia and Flanders. Among these works, Rainer of Huy's famous baptismal font from Liège's collegiate church of St. Bartholomew, already displayed in the 1924 Paris show, was once again set to be the exhibition's centerpiece. The diplomatic character of the show helped secure masterpieces held in major Belgian and French collections. German, Dutch, Italian, British, and American museums also lent works, bringing an unparalleled international array of objects to an exhibition on Mosan art from the early medieval period to the eighteenth century. Some five hundred medieval artifacts were shown in Liège between September and October 1951; they made up almost half of the objects on display and ranged in media from coins, metalwork, and sculpture to ivory plaques and manuscripts.

The exhibition's catalog is an important tool to understand the show's broader political implications (Fig. 12.5). As in Bern a few years earlier, the artistic production of the Meuse Valley that was centered around the diocese of Liège was presented as pivotal for European (rather than a national) culture: "This exhibition . . . is, above all, the result of the efforts made to show how a school was formed on the banks of the Meuse whose aesthetics had, in the heart of the Middle Ages, a fertile influence; in the diocese of Liège was written one of the most enduring pages of the cultural history of the West."<sup>56</sup> In a long and detailed introduction structured around the three sections of the exhibition—*The Era of the Diocese*, *The Era of the Region*, and *Modern Times*—Lejeune gave a historic overview of each period, focusing on the broad geographic reach of the Meuse Valley in the medieval period. He also emphasized the region's significance for contemporary Europe by writing that "the West does not know our political borders, our passports."<sup>57</sup> In the same spirit, he avoided words like "Belgian" and "Walloon," concentrating instead on rulers, regional history, and supra-national institutions (foremost the Church) as binding elements that connected towns and artistic centers across the region. As stated by the press, the exhibition's main goal was to highlight the links between the geographical and social structures of the

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54 "Jean Lejeune," in *Encyclopédie du Mouvement wallon*, ed. Paul Delforge (Charleroi: Institut Jules Destrée, 2000), 962.

55 Lejeune referred to "The past they want to take from us, too," in his *Liège et son pays: Naissance d'une patrie (XIIIe–XIVe siècles)* (Liège: Université de Liège, 1948), 7.

56 *Art mosan et arts anciens du Pays de Liège* (1951), 13.

57 *Art mosan et arts anciens du Pays de Liège* (1951), 21.

# art mosan et arts anciens du pays de liège



éditions de l'a.s.b.l. le grand liège

**Fig. 12.5:** Title page of exhibition catalog for *Art mosan et arts anciens du Pays de Liège*, 1951.

Photo: Reproduced by kind permission of the ASBL Le Grand Liège.

diocese of Liège that spanned present-day territories situated in Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands.<sup>58</sup>

A year and a half before the opening of the Liège exhibition, a political event had a major impact on the common future of those five nations: the Schuman Declaration of 9 May 1950. Exactly ten years after the Germans invaded France and the Low Countries, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Robert Schuman, announced a plan to establish a supranational body that would regulate those countries' coal and steel industries. This industrial-political entity, intended to make war "not only unthinkable but materially impossible," yielded the Treaty of Paris. Signed on 18 April 1951, it put coal and steel in the Benelux countries, France, Italy, and the Federal Republic of Germany under the authority of a single unified commission.<sup>59</sup> Importantly, this represented the first step of a process that would culminate with the creation of the European Economic Community, the immediate predecessor of the present-day European Union.

The international tour of the Liège exhibition further reinforced this nascent drive for European unity. The show was on view first in the French capital under the name

<sup>58</sup> "L'Exposition internationale d'art mosan," *Le Soir*, 29 June 1951.

<sup>59</sup> Willem Maas, *Creating European Citizens* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 13.

*Trésors d'art de la Vallée de la Meuse* (Art Treasures from the Meuse Valley) and then moved to Rotterdam, a city in the Rhine-Meuse delta, with the title *Kunst der Maasvallei* (Art from the Meuse Valley). Although the exhibition did not travel to the Federal Republic, Germany's prewar scholarly debates—Meuse or Rhine?—and postwar museum logistics continued to influence its premises. Pierre Francastel, briefly mentioned in the Liège catalog's note of thanks, provided a direct link to the Second World War era. From his chair at the newly inaugurated École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris, he seems to have been an important mediator between Belgian authorities and French museums, acting as a sort of French spokesperson for the main team in Liège.<sup>60</sup> Pierre Verlet, curator at the Louvre, wrote that the exhibition “seemed to be driven by academics instead of museum curators,” implicitly acknowledging Francastel's unofficial, albeit seemingly central, organizational role.<sup>61</sup> In fact, the main conclusions of Francastel's essay on German propaganda and Mosan art published in 1945 were restated in a preliminary report on the Liège exhibition project. According to it, the foundations of the history of Mosan art, which had been laid by von Falke, were put in danger by German scholars after the First World War.<sup>62</sup> This document also praised Marcel Laurent's 1931 response to the “lacunary and unilateral” views articulated by Braun and Benkeen. The aggressive tone of Francastel's book, which needs to be situated against the German invasion of France in 1940, was no longer present; but his narrative of a pan-German attack on the discipline continued to inform scholarly views. Ultimately, the goal of *Art Treasures from the Meuse Valley* seems to have been to promote the “Mosan cause” in the way von Falke's revolutionary work did at the turn of the century.

German museums and collections were central to the exhibition's success; one could even argue that they were its catalysts. A French diplomatic letter dating from late December 1949 mentioned the idea of a Mosan exhibition in Liège that would feature works from public and private collections, “particularly German artworks.”<sup>63</sup> The specific mention of German medieval art, as well as a reference to Belgian cultural officer Émile Langui, hint that the 1949 Brussels-Amsterdam shows might have sparked the idea of a further exhibition that would include, for the first time in the context of a postwar Mosan show, objects coming from Germany. Several items displayed in Brussels and Amsterdam in 1949 were also featured in the 1951–52 exhibitions.<sup>64</sup> Rainer of Huy's crucifix, the only artwork attributed to this master besides the Liège font, was lent by the Schnütgen Museum.<sup>65</sup>

60 Jean Lejeune and Count Borchgrave d'Altena to Georges Salles, 7 March 1951, AN, 20150042/93.

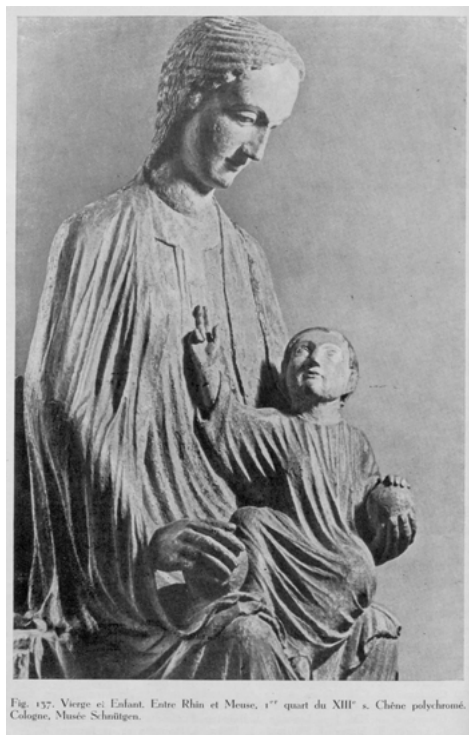
61 Pierre Verlet to Georges Salles, 8 June 1951, AN, 20150042/93.

62 Jean Lejeune, Exhibition project *Art mosan et arts anciens du Pays de Liège*, no date, CAD, 554 INVA 1534.

63 Philippe Erlanger to Marcel Abraham, 29 December 1949, CAD, 554 INVA 1534.

64 In fact, the list of German artworks to be requested for the later exhibition simply cited the Brussels catalog numbers. “Œuvres demandées en Allemagne,” 24 January 1951, LVR, 35242.

65 *Art mosan et arts anciens du Pays de Liège* (1951), 166, no. 80.



**Fig. 12.6:** Alfred Tritschler, *Aachen Madonna*, 1949 (Cologne, Schnütgen Museum, inv. no. A15) as published in *Les arts plastiques* 4 (1952). Note caption identifying the sculpture as “between the Rhine and the Meuse.” Photo: Dr. Paul Wolff & Tritschler, Historisches Bildarchiv, 77654 Offenburg.

Another piece previously on display in Brussels and Amsterdam was also lent to Liège, Paris, and Rotterdam: the Aachen Madonna (Fig. 12.6). This wooden sculpture, also from the Schnütgen Museum, had already been identified by Fritz Witte and Erwin Panofsky as Mosan.<sup>66</sup> Both in the 1949 exhibitions in Belgium and the Netherlands, as well as in the new Mosan shows, the sculpture was described as having been created “between the Rhine and the Meuse,” a neutral characterization that embodied the conciliatory spirit evoked by Schnitzler regarding the Shrine of St. Heribert. The Aachen Madonna had not been lent to the 1925 exhibition in Cologne, but in the context of the 1949–52 exhibitions it served to showcase the interconnected character of the Rhine-Meuse region, a position that would not have suited German political claims of the 1920s and 1930s.

The Heribert Shrine, whose authorship had been the source of such controversy before the war, became once again a target of heated negotiations. This time, however, the bone of contention was not its Rhenish or Mosan origin, but its very presence in the exhibition. According to Lejeune, if the shrine were shown, it by itself would make the

<sup>66</sup> Fritz Witte, *Die Skulpturen der Sammlung Schnütgen in Köln* (Berlin: Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1912), 64; Erwin Panofsky, *Die deutsche Plastik des elften bis dreizehnten Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig: Schmidt & Günther, 1924), 123.

section on goldsmiths' work a success.<sup>67</sup> After Cologne's refusal to lend the shrine to the first show in Liège, the Parisian organizers made several diplomatic attempts to ensure that it would be present in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs. In November 1951, Lejeune received Wilhelm Hausenstein, German ambassador to France, and Ernst Schwering, recently reelected as Cologne's mayor; both Germans favored the loan.<sup>68</sup> Cardinal Josef Frings, Archbishop of Cologne, along with the cathedral's vicar, Joseph Hoster, who was in charge of the treasury, also acted as mediators. But Hoster, in his report to Frings, stated that the shrine could not endure another transport, noting that many German artworks had suffered significant damages when sent on traveling exhibitions. Still, Hoster recognized the political importance of this loan and proceeded to lay out a set of conditions under which the shrine could be lent, including the same insurance valuation of \$500,000 that had been applied for the Brussels and Amsterdam shows two years earlier.<sup>69</sup>

These "draconian loan conditions" caused Lejeune and the Parisian organizers to give up on the idea of securing the Shrine of St. Heribert for their exhibit.<sup>70</sup> Instead, it was integrated in a new installation of Cologne Cathedral's treasury in February 1950 before being moved (in 1955) to its original location at the main altar of St. Heribert's church in Deutz.<sup>71</sup> Hoster's reticence to authorize the loan is part of a pattern that many German institutions followed after the establishment of the Federal Republic in 1949. The Mosan exhibitions of 1951–52, which were academically and logistically intertwined with postwar Germany's political fate, were already too late to fully profit from the unprecedented diplomatic exhibition network that had unfolded after 1945 with which this essay began. The wartime evacuation and return process that had prompted the flurry of temporary displays in the postwar years no longer served as an excuse to expose cultural artifacts to risky transports. Institutions therefore had to establish a new model of relationship, one based on reciprocity, not unilateral reparations. As a consequence, they refused to send frail artworks across Europe for diplomatically driven exhibitions.

Postwar temporary exhibitions such as *Art Treasures from the Meuse Valley*, which wove together scholarly studies and the physical conservation of objects in mu-

<sup>67</sup> Jean Lejeune to Jacques Guerin, 4 December 1951, CAD, 554 INVA 1534.

<sup>68</sup> Jacques Guerin to Wolfgang Fritz Volbach, 17 November 1951, Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs archive, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris (hereafter cited as UAD), DI-273.

<sup>69</sup> Joseph Hoster to Josef Frings, 29 November 1951, HAEK, CR II 27.24,5/185. For comparison: the much smaller Head Reliquary of Pope Alexander from the Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire (hereafter cited as MRAHB) in Brussels was the object from that museum with the highest insurance value; but at 2.5 million Belgian francs (roughly \$50,000), it was valued at only ten percent of the proposed insurance value for the *Shrine*. List of objects for the Liège exhibition, 25 August 1951, MRAHB, Dons et legs, 2777. Currency conversion performed using Fxtop.com's Historical Converter tool.

<sup>70</sup> Jean Lejeune to Yolande Amic, 8 December 1951, UAD, DI-273.

<sup>71</sup> "Wiedereröffnung der Schatzkammer," *Kölner Domblatt* 4/5 (1950): 171–72; Martin Seidler, *Der Schrein des Heiligen Heribert in Köln-Deutz* (Regensburg: Schnell und Steiner, 2016), 15.

seums, constituted prime moments for the political instrumentalization of the Middle Ages and its material heritage. In turn, these exhibitions instigated future displays: the 1972 Belgian-German traveling exhibition *Rhine and Meuse, Art and Culture (800–1400)*, which placed medieval Mosan artworks face-to-face with their Rhenish counterparts, was a direct result of the 1950s collaboration between Lejeune and Schnitzler.<sup>72</sup> In conclusion, one can say that the distant medieval past, embodied by artifacts such as the Shrine of St. Heribert, proved effective in both dividing and reconciling twentieth-century scholars, curators, and audiences across several countries. The Mosan exhibitions of the early 1950s, for all their ephemeral existence, should be understood not only as an outcome of contemporary diplomatic efforts but also as part of a continuous historiographic development forged by complex pre- and postwar transnational relationships and interests. At the crossroads of universities and museums, these events continuously shaped the reception of medieval art by confronting it, explicitly or implicitly, with modern politics.

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<sup>72</sup> *Rhein und Maas: Kunst und Kultur 800–1400* (Cologne: Kunsthalle and Brussels: Musées Royaux, 1972); Balace, “Historiographie,” 217.



Sigrid Danielson

## Imagining Charlemagne in America

Early in December of 1942, the publisher W. W. Norton sponsored a half-page advertisement in *The New York Times Book Review*.<sup>1</sup> Tempting readers and consumers with the tagline “Books to give are ‘Books that Live,’” the layout presented several options for holiday gift giving (Fig. 13.1). Curiously, *Mediaeval Art* by the Princeton University art historian Charles Rufus Morey (1877–1955) received top billing, above several other texts devoted to topics of cultural improvement.<sup>2</sup> The paragraph describing Morey’s work explained that it was “a volume of great beauty and permanent worth” (Fig. 13.2).

The publishers promoted Morey’s contextual approach to the history of art stating, “MEDIAEVAL ART traces the changes in politics, society, and thought that parallel these developments.” A simplified illustration of the book’s dust jacket depicted the title in Gothic-inspired script. Just below, an image of the Virgin and Child from Amiens Cathedral was superimposed on a stylized drawing of that Gothic cathedral. A star-covered ribbon extended from both sides of the book, reinforcing its future as a gift, but its publication date of 1942, during the height of World War II, also suggested an American, if not a deliberately patriotic, significance for the publication.

At first glance, the assortment of books chosen for the advertisement seem to cover a mishmash of topics. A closer examination shows that they all aligned with themes of self-improvement, specifically with American aspirations for status of the middlebrow variety. The blurbs accompanying each title promised modern readers a better understanding of their own era, one mediated through leisured reading about topics of cultural importance. Guided by expert authors, consumers could improve their understanding of Western civilization in the fields of art, music, literature, and even mathematics. This commodified approach enticed Americans to increase their cultural capital through the study of the arts and culture. The advertisement repeated this theme for each book. For example, *The Great Age of Greek Literature* would bring comfort for a “troubled present—a rich contribution to the library of every modern home.” A passage from Morey’s introduction was also paraphrased for the promotion;

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1 *The New York Times Book Review*, 6 December 1942, 24.

2 Charles Rufus Morey, *Mediaeval Art* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1942).

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**Note:** This essay is based on presentations for the International Congress on Medieval Studies in Kalamazoo, Michigan, 2019, and the Distinguished Alumni Lecture for the Medieval Studies Institute at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana, 2020. Evan Gatti, Diane Reilly, and audiences at those proceedings offered many helpful comments about the project. Brigitte Buettner, William Diebold, and the anonymous reviewers of this volume generously provided valuable guidance for completing this essay. All errors are my own.

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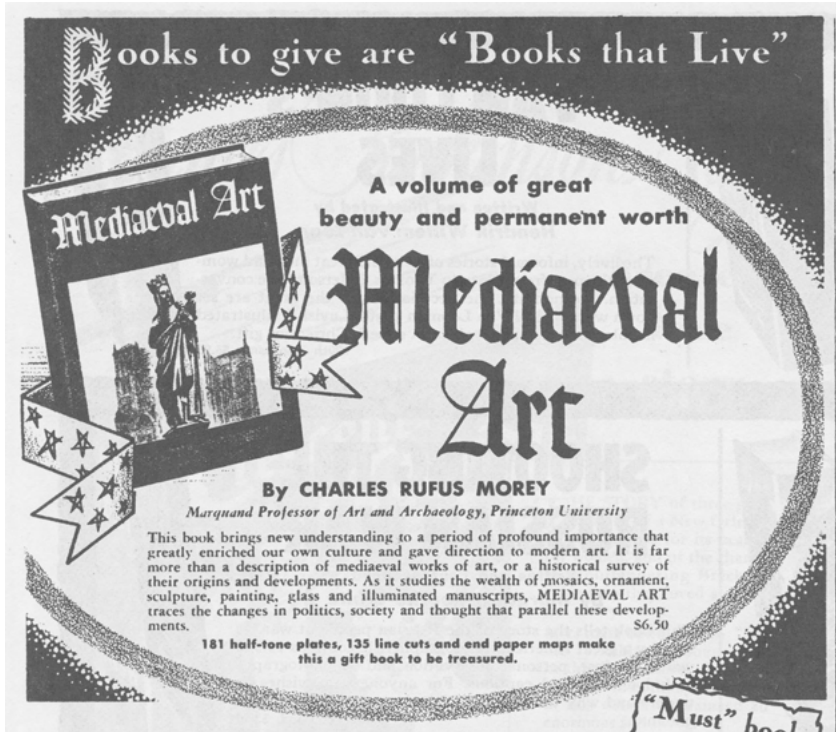
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"BOOKS THAT LIVE"

Fig. 13.1: "Books to give are 'Books that Live,'" *New York Times Book Review*, 6 December 1942. Photo: Author.



**Fig. 13.2:** “Books to give are ‘Books that Live,’” *New York Times Book Review*, 6 December 1942 (detail).  
Photo: Author.

he claimed the art of the medieval era was a worthy pursuit because it made “a contribution of profound importance, since through it our culture was greatly enriched and direction given to our modern art.”<sup>3</sup> In each case, the marketing reiterated that a reader’s formative acquisition of information about European cultures of the past was essential for understanding the present and, indeed, expected of an accomplished, modern American.

As with the other advertised works, Morey’s book was encyclopedic in scope. It covered the arts and architecture of the fourth to the late fifteenth centuries, including lengthy chapters devoted to the Byzantine Empire and western Europe, as well as medieval England and Ireland. Reviewers of the book echoed the advertisement’s promise of value by praising *Mediaeval Art*’s accessible content and its significance as a lasting testament to the author’s expertise in the field.<sup>4</sup> In the first half of the twenti-

<sup>3</sup> Morey, *Mediaeval Art*, 17.

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth J. Conant, review of *Mediaeval Art*, by Charles Rufus Morey, *Speculum* 19 (1944): 365–66; David M. Robb, review of *Mediaeval Art*, by Charles Rufus Morey, *American Journal of Archaeology* 49 (1945): 116–17.

eth century, Morey was deeply influential for the development and promotion of art-historical studies in the United States. While serving as chair of the Department of Art and Archaeology at Princeton University between 1924 and 1945, he was a prolific scholar committed to the study of style and iconography who founded Princeton's Index of Christian Art (now the Index of Medieval Art).<sup>5</sup> He took on leadership roles in the College Art Association (CAA) and encouraged the professionalization and expansion of art history at American universities. Morey's accomplishments in the years after the war were primarily international, with his work in Rome as cultural attaché to the United States embassy and as acting director of the American Academy. Recognition of his contributions was reinforced in 1953, when CAA created the prestigious Charles Rufus Morey Book Award. Conferred annually to authors of significant publications in art history, it attests to his continued importance as a defining figure in the field. Morey's reach also extended across multiple generations of educators, transforming the landscape of art history in the United States, as many of his students went on to draft textbooks, teach in art history programs throughout the country, and secure a place for medieval art in university curricula.<sup>6</sup>

Morey's publications were well known within academic circles, but what was the appeal of *Mediaeval Art* to the broader public? That audience would likely have been encouraged by the publisher's promises of cultural insight, a feature also commended by a reviewer who praised Morey's book as an engaging overview for general readers rather than a text that focused on elements of academic "controversy."<sup>7</sup> The formal aspects of architecture from the later Middle Ages also could have resonated with American readers, who would have encountered examples of revival Romanesque and Gothic styles in local ecclesiastical, commercial, and collegiate buildings.<sup>8</sup> But what of the arts produced during the early Middle Ages, between 600 and 1050? *Mediaeval Art* was one of the few American publications to include a comprehensive examination of arts associated with the emperor Charlemagne (ca. 747–814) and his descendants.<sup>9</sup> I will demonstrate that Charlemagne was a compelling figure for early twentieth-century Americans, not only in academia, but also within society at large. During this era, there was striking

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5 Elizabeth Sears, "Iconography and Iconology at Princeton," in *Iconography Beyond the Crossroads: Image, Meaning and Method in Medieval Art*, ed. Pamela A. Patton and Catherine A. Fernandez (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2022): 9–33, at 14.

6 Rensselaer W. Lee, "Charles Rufus Morey, 1877–1955," *The Art Bulletin* 37, no. 4 (1955): iii–vii, at iii–iv.

7 Robb, review of *Mediaeval Art*, 116

8 Michael D. Clark, "Ralph Adams Cram and the Americanization of the Middle Ages," *Journal of American Studies*, 23 no. 2 (1989): 195–213, at 202; Kevin D. Murphy and Lisa Reilly, *Skyscraper Gothic: Medieval Style and Modernist Buildings* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2017).

9 During the interwar years, English language publications that focused on early medieval art were rare. Two exceptions were Roger Hinks, *Carolingian Art* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1935) and Harold W. Picton, *Early German Art and Its Origins: From the Beginnings to about 1050* (London: B. T. Batsford, Ltd., 1939).

continuity between the ways that art historians employed concepts of race and ethnic identity to shape the role of Charlemagne in European history for their students and the depictions of him found in commercial publications and visual culture intended for consumers. He was portrayed as a powerful monarch whose influence in shaping early medieval European culture and the visual arts often was deployed to suit ideological ends. Academic and popular characterizations of Charlemagne shared a vision of the past that blended racialized and nationalist perspectives to serve narratives of American progress and cultural improvement.

## A Charlemagne for American Art History

*Mediaeval Art* and art history survey texts published during the years leading up to World War II were fascinated with the early medieval monarch Charlemagne, who ruled as king of the Franks beginning in 768 and then as Holy Roman emperor from 800 until his death in 814. During the early twentieth century, he was characterized as a galvanizing figure who successfully mediated between a vigorous Germanic culture and a waning Roman one. This portrayal was employed across the small corpus of art-historical surveys published for American audiences in the first half of the twentieth century. The best known, Helen Gardner's *Art through the Ages*, was initially published in 1926 and issued in a second edition a decade later.<sup>10</sup> Gardner's book was exceedingly popular and set a methodological expectation for survey texts to situate the arts in their formal and cultural contexts.<sup>11</sup> Between 1935 and 1940 three additional works, now largely forgotten, established a foundation for teaching art history in the United States. In 1935, former students of Morey at Princeton, David M. Robb and Jesse J. Garrison, published *Art in the Western World*.<sup>12</sup> Two years later, the theater and art critic Sheldon Cheney issued *A World History of Art*, a comprehensive volume integrating the study of visual arts with theater and music history.<sup>13</sup> Then, in 1940, Raymond Stites, education director at the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. and professor at Antioch College, published *The Arts and Man*.<sup>14</sup> Morey's *Mediaeval Art* from 1942 represented a capstone of sorts to these volumes. Focused specifically on the arts of the Middle Ages, he provided a more comprehensive examination of Carolingian art, one specifically marketed to the general American reader.

10 Helen Gardner, *Art through the Ages* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1926); 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1936). Unless noted, subsequent citations refer to the second edition.

11 Barbara Jaffee, "'Gardner' Variety Formalism: Helen Gardner and *Art through the Ages*," in *Partisan Canons*, ed. Anna Brzyski (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 203–222, at 204–5.

12 David M. Robb and J. J. Garrison, *Art in the Western World* (New York: Harper & Brothers Pub., 1935).

13 Sheldon Cheney, *A World History of Art* (New York: The Viking Press, 1937).

14 Raymond S. Stites, *The Arts and Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1940).

In each of these publications, Charlemagne was the anchoring historical figure positioned at the start of chapters devoted to Romanesque art. He was constructed as a forward-thinking personality who provided impetus for cultural change. The first and second editions of Gardner's textbook lionized the monarch in just this fashion.<sup>15</sup> She vividly characterized western Europe as in flux. Rome had originally "established its customs and culture," but "in swept the barbarians, illiterate but of the fresh vigorous blood of the North."<sup>16</sup> Gardner then explained that Charlemagne's authority worked alongside the steadying influence of the church: "The one brilliant spot was the reign of Charlemagne, when for a short time order was restored, education and learning revived, and the arts stimulated."<sup>17</sup> In closing her chapter on Romanesque art, Gardner once again invoked a model of cultural fusion and located the origins of cultural change with the monarch by explaining: "The barbarians, Christianized, were going to school to the old traditions of the Mediterranean civilizations, but were transforming them with the fresh vitality of the north. North, South, and East were mingling."<sup>18</sup> *And there it is:* the first of many descriptions found in early survey texts where the vocabulary of formal qualities was paired with historically charged terms such as blood and vigor, effectively blurring the distinctions between concepts of ethnic identity, race, and culture.

Gardner's peers also employed this approach in their publications. Robb and Garrison summarized the Carolingian era as one of cultural blending, as they claimed that barbarians, harnessed by the forces of Christian expansion, led to a revival of Roman learning.<sup>19</sup> They also credited Charlemagne with fostering "a short-lived Renaissance." The authors neatly cribbed Gardner, slightly modifying her "one bright spot" metaphor for the ruler. They heralded his advent, explaining that "a single ray of light appears in the pervasive gloom of the Dark Ages."<sup>20</sup> Even Cheney, who only briefly discussed Carolingian art (his volume stressed the arts of later periods and especially those of the modern era), emphasized the emperor's skillful leadership and employed a nationalist sentiment by stating: "Under Charlemagne various forces were finally brought into some sort of focus. It is from 'the Carolingian renaissance' that historians date the entry of the French spirit into European art."<sup>21</sup> Like Gardner, each of these authors articulated Charlemagne's contribution as a keen ability to bring forth cohesion out of disarray.

These textbook analyses of Carolingian art and culture regularly integrated discussion of ethnic, racial, cultural, and national characteristics to contextualize the works.

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15 Gardner, *Art through the Ages*, 280.

16 Gardner, *Art through the Ages*, 278.

17 Gardner, *Art through the Ages*, 280.

18 Gardner, *Art through the Ages*, 302.

19 Robb and Garrison, *Art in the Western World*, 461.

20 Robb and Garrison, *Art in the Western World*, 84.

21 Cheney, *A World History of Art*, 400.

These references also ascribed an intrinsic energy that was thought to shape medieval artistic styles. For example, Robb and Garrison claimed that the Carolingian artist's "basic intent was to give expression to the ideal of the vital force which was the Teutonic contribution to the background out of which grew the culture of the later Middle Ages."<sup>22</sup> In his text, Stites posited a similar line of cultural development, albeit more succinctly, when he explained that the "art of the Dark Ages led to the portals of Chartres, Amiens, Reims, and Bourges."<sup>23</sup> Morey also situated Charlemagne as the essential progenitor for the Romanesque.<sup>24</sup> Initially, he introduced the ruler as a driven reformer, noting "The Carolingian 'renaissance' had no popular basis, but was the product of the individual effort of Charlemagne and his successors, the churchmen of the imperial entourage."<sup>25</sup> Then he concluded his discussion by asserting that Charlemagne's focused mediation between the northern and Roman impulses ultimately gave rise to Romanesque architecture. With a didactic (if inconsistent) logic, Morey claimed this style represented a barbarian triumph over the legacy of the late antique as "wherein a traditional tribal instinct had finally overborne the imperial machinery which Charlemagne labored so long to construct."<sup>26</sup> In each of these examples, the authors' use of racial, ethnic, and nationalistic terminology reinforced the shaping of the emperor as a catalyst who initiated a trajectory of cultural development.

Despite the pivotal role awarded Charlemagne as a European culture builder, these early publications included remarkably few works of art that dated to his reign. For example, the Palatine Chapel at Aachen (dedicated 805), presumably a useful monument to demonstrate the ruler's patronage and command of Roman and barbarian models, was rarely discussed in the textbooks. Instead, this first generation of American survey publications employed manuscripts, most of them made after Charlemagne's death, as the defining medium for the arts of the Carolingian era. This focus was significantly influenced by two image collections that were circulating in the 1920s, just prior to the publication of the first corpus of art history textbooks. These sets of photographic plates were essentially textbooks without a written narrative and represent early attempts to codify a canon for teaching Carolingian art in the United States. The first, a commercial endeavor, *Student Series K, Mediaeval Art*, was compiled by Morey in 1922 and made available for students to purchase through The University Prints company.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Robb and Garrison, *Art in the Western World*, 461.

<sup>23</sup> Stites, *The Arts and Man*, 368.

<sup>24</sup> Following a trend common to his era, Morey placed the Carolingian narrative at the start of a long chapter devoted to Romanesque art.

<sup>25</sup> Morey, *Mediaeval Art*, 267.

<sup>26</sup> Morey, *Mediaeval Art*, 250.

<sup>27</sup> Charles Rufus Morey, *The University Prints: Student Series K, Medieval Art* (Boston: The University Prints, n.d.). Its publication date was listed in the "Report of the President for the Year Ending December 31, 1922," *The Official Register of Princeton University* 14, no. 2 (1923): 73.

In his set, Morey focused on the sculpture, book illumination, and mosaics created in Europe as well as the broader Mediterranean; he included examples of folios from several Carolingian manuscripts.<sup>28</sup> The second collection, *The Carnegie Art Reference Set*, was more comprehensive as it covered the arts of ancient Egypt to the modern era and included references to a library of art history books.<sup>29</sup> The Carnegie Sets, as they came to be known, were a philanthropic initiative and given to smaller colleges and universities, typically institutions with teacher-education programs.<sup>30</sup> Arranged chronologically and following art according to modern national boundaries, the Carnegie Set limited its examples of Carolingian art to manuscripts.<sup>31</sup> The duplication of one key manuscript across Morey's *Series K* and the Carnegie Set suggests that, for Carolingian art, a canon, albeit one with only a few examples, was in the making.

Both collections included plates of individual folios from the Utrecht Psalter (ca. 830). Significantly, the Coronation Gospels, a work associated directly with the court of Charlemagne, was not selected to shape art-historical narratives about the emperor and his cultural contributions.<sup>32</sup> Instead, the Utrecht Psalter was assigned that role (Fig. 13.3). This manuscript, with its engaging ink drawings depicting verses from the psalms, would become (and continues to be) the ubiquitous exemplar for the Carolingian era in most survey textbooks. Produced at least a generation after Charlemagne's death, this manuscript and its images would prove to be a malleable tool in the hands of art historians as they constructed a vigorous Germanic or Teutonic vision of Charlemagne and the Carolingian era for American university students and interested readers.

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28 It is unclear to what extent Morey's selection of images was shaped by the desire to generate a specific canon of Carolingian works or if his choices may have been influenced by the photographs available for reproduction in the publisher's catalog. Morey's original set included images of the Utrecht Psalter (ca. 830), the Vivian Bible (ca. 845), and the Sacramentary of Metz (ca. 870). A later version added the Gospel Lectionary of Godescalc (781–83), the Coronation Gospels (ca. 800; identified as Byzantine), and the Lorsch Gospels (778–820).

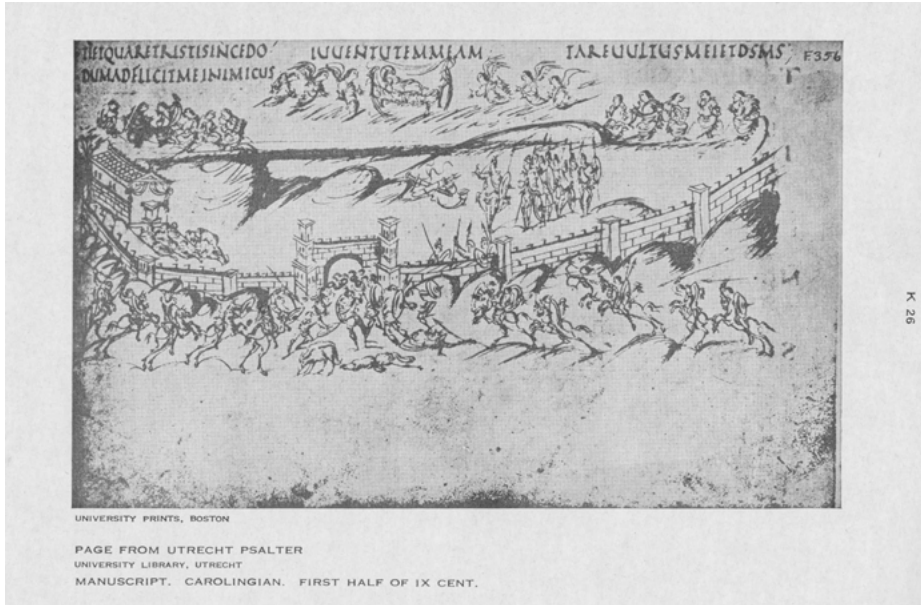
29 Originally, there were plans for a textbook to accompany the Carnegie Set, but it was never completed. Raymond S. Stites, "Introduction," in *The Carnegie Art Reference Set for Colleges*, ed. Carnegie Corporation of New York (New York: Rudolf Lesch Fine Arts, Inc., 1939), n.p.

30 Carnegie Corporation, *Carnegie Art Reference Set*, n.p.

31 The Carnegie Set did not incorporate images from the Gospel Lectionary of Godescalc or the Sacramentary of Metz, opting instead for one from the Gospels of Saint-Médard de Soissons (early ninth century) and a second from the Utrecht Psalter.

32 Given the more focused scope of *Mediaeval Art*, it is not surprising that Morey does discuss a few manuscripts associated with Charlemagne's court.





**Fig. 13.3:** Psalm 43 from the Utrecht Psalter illustrated in Morey, *The University Prints: Student Series K*, 1922. Photo: Author.

## A Racialized History of Early Medieval Art

Today, the charged vocabulary that Gardner, Morey, and their peers applied in these early publications is jarring, especially if one is familiar with the neutral tone adopted in contemporary art history survey textbooks. In recent decades historians and art historians have nuanced their language, frequently preferring the concept of ethnicity, rather than race, when discussing issues associated with early medieval identity.<sup>33</sup> For Morey and his peers working in art history during the early decades of the twentieth century, employing concepts of race would have been the normative approach.<sup>34</sup> These early authors' descriptions of a beleaguered late antique culture reinvigorated through encounters with barbarian people from the north are indebted to several strands of ac-

<sup>33</sup> For example, see Helmut Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity and the Framing of Western Ethnicity, 550–850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

<sup>34</sup> For a recent discussion of the European history and context for concepts of race in art-historical writing, see Éric Michaud, *The Barbarian Invasions: A Genealogy of the History of Art* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2019).

ademic inquiry.<sup>35</sup> In particular, this racialized approach relied on theories about the early Middle Ages developed by American historians and European art historians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Historians frequently adopted specific romanticized idioms to describe aspects of the early Middle Ages; these included “development” (lifted from Darwinism) and “spirit” or “consciousness” (taken from Protestant spiritualism and Hegelianism).<sup>36</sup> The Teutonic origins thesis was actively promoted by many, including the historian Henry Baxter Adams (1850–1901) who taught at Johns Hopkins during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This theory argued that ancient Germanic society was not only “superior to all others,” but that it had a foundational place in American identity. Adherents claimed that Germanic peoples embodied a democratic essence that had been transmitted from its origins in northern Europe to Anglo-Saxon England, and, ultimately, the United States, where it continued to flourish.<sup>37</sup> In the words of contemporary historians Patrick Geary and Otto Gerhard Oexle, America for many nineteenth-century academics was “the culmination of Germanic racial evolution.”<sup>38</sup> As Gardner, Robb and Garrison, and Stites drafted the first generation of art history textbooks, the approaches followed by historians such as Adams were already decades out of favor.<sup>39</sup> But even as American historians were becoming leery of methods that engaged with racialized concepts, many of their colleagues in art history continued to employ these ideas and integrate them into frameworks for teaching early medieval and, especially, Carolingian art.<sup>40</sup> In publications intended for the non-specialist reader, discussions of the Utrecht Psalter employed racialized and nationalistic approaches while also cultivating an image of Charlemagne and Carolingian culture as essential precursors to American modernity.<sup>41</sup>

Gardner, Morey, and their colleagues did not identify with or subscribe to a single theoretical approach in their survey publications; they sampled a range of art-historical methods. If there was a dominant influence, it would be variations on the ideas pro-

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35 Éric Michaud, “Barbarian Invasions and the Racialization of Art History,” *October* 139 (2012): 59–76, at 60.

36 Robin Fleming, “Picturesque History and the Medieval in Nineteenth-Century America,” *American Historical Review* 100, no. 4 (1995): 1061–95, at 1078. For elaboration on these concepts in relation to the era around 1900, see T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture 1880–1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981) and Michael D. Clark, *The American Discovery of Tradition 1865–1942* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005).

37 Fleming, “Picturesque,” 1078.

38 Patrick Geary and Otto Gerhard Oexle, *Medieval Germany in America* (Washington, D.C.: German Historical Institute, 1996), 22.

39 Gabrielle Spiegel, *The Past as Text and the Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 66.

40 Thomas Crow, “The Practice of Art History in America,” *Daedalus* 135, no. 2 (2006): 70–90, at 75.

41 The Utrecht Psalter became central to the canon of medieval art during this era. An examination of how it came to play such a key role would be a welcome addition to the scholarship on Carolingian manuscripts

posed by the art historians associated with the Vienna School, especially Josef Strzygowski (1862–1941).<sup>42</sup> Today, his early publications are being revisited with a recognition of his importance to the emergence of comparative art history and to the examination of the arts with a global perspective.<sup>43</sup> In the 1920s, he spent considerable time in the United States working as an academic, but also cultivating a sizeable public following.<sup>44</sup> For Morey and the authors of the survey texts, the attraction to Strzygowski's ideas lay in his focus on the visual aspects of northern art and how best to align its formal elements with often-racialized characterizations such as barbarian, Teutonic, and Germanic.<sup>45</sup> This mode of inquiry aligned with Morey's generalized approach, in which style could be mapped to reveal successive interrelationships between all manner of social identifiers including culture, race, and nationality.<sup>46</sup> This method was, in turn, employed by Morey's colleagues in their survey textbooks and proved especially useful for aligning the drawings in the Utrecht Psalter with the authors' construction of Charlemagne and the Carolingian era.

Given the centrality of this manuscript as an exemplar, the range of folios that were selected to represent the Utrecht Psalter is telling; each author employed a different image.<sup>47</sup> It was as though any composition from the manuscript could fulfill the task of conveying key facets of expression, dynamism between forces, and artistic development. Although the authors identified formal and iconographic elements, often tracing them to Mediterranean and late antique antecedents, they also consistently stressed how the images manifested qualities specific to cultural spirit. In their introduction to Carolingian manuscript painting, Robb and Garrison explained that the Utrecht Psalter was an "outstanding example" of how the early medieval artist's "basic intent" was "to give expression to the ideal of vital force which was the Teutonic contribution to the background out of which grew the culture of the Middle

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<sup>42</sup> Sears, "Iconography," 14.

<sup>43</sup> Guido Tigler, "Circolazione di modelli artistici: l'incontro tra l'arte classica del bacino del Mediterraneo con le arti delle civiltà dell'Oriente e quelle dei 'barbari' del Nord germanico nelle teorie della Scuola di Vienna," in *Le vie della comunicazione nel medioevo: Livelli, soggetti e spazi d'intervento nei cambiamenti sociali e politici*, ed. Marialuisa Bottazzi, Paolo Buffo, and Caterina Ciccopiedi, (Trieste: Centro Europeo Ricerche Medievale, 2019): 101–59, at 158.

<sup>44</sup> Christopher S. Wood, "Strzygowski and Riegl in America," *Journal of Art Historiography* 17 (2017): 1–19, at 4; William J. Diebold, "Baby or Bathwater? Josef Strzygowski's 'Ruins of Tombs of the Latin Kings on the Haram in Jerusalem' (1936) and its Reception," in *Orient oder Rom? History and Reception of a Historiographical Myth (1901–1970)*, ed. Ivan Foletti and Francisco Lovino (Rome: Viella, 2018), 65–82, at 66–70.

<sup>45</sup> Margaret Olin, "Art History and Ideology: Alois Riegl and Joseph Strzygowski," in *Cultural Visions: Essays in Honor of the History of Culture*, ed. Penny Schine Gold and Benjamin Sax (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000): 151–70, at 164.

<sup>46</sup> Sears, "Iconography," 15.

<sup>47</sup> Morey reproduced the plate depicting Psalm 43 from his *Series K* and added a new drawing copied from a photograph of Psalm 11 (see Fig. 13.4); Robb and Garrison used the image for Psalm 74; Stites opted for a photograph of Psalm 150.

Ages.”<sup>48</sup> Later in their discussion of the image they had chosen from the manuscript, the authors connected the personifications of summer and winter and the depiction of facial features to earlier Hellenistic and late antique models, but rapidly transitioned back to a discussion of spirit, stating “the purpose of the artist was not the suggestion of form in space but the expression of dynamic force by the intrinsic vivacity of linear movement.”<sup>49</sup> With this approach, the authors effectively bracketed the visual analysis between two discussions of dynamic force, reinforcing that a Germanic heritage was perceptible in the composition and connecting the visual elements to a moment of cultural change.

The lack of uniformity in image selection sometimes led to conflicting opinions. For his part, Stites made the opposite claim to that of Robb and Garrison, stating that the Mediterranean tradition was visually dominant in the Utrecht Psalter and suggesting that the folio revealed “the first step in taming the northern spirit by the classical southern ideals of form.”<sup>50</sup> While these brief examples demonstrate the malleability of the Utrecht Psalter to support varied interpretations, it is important that, even when the authors disagreed as to which cultural force was in the ascendant, they employed identical methods of evaluation to make their point. Each author relied on the analysis of formal elements to reveal some aspect of the racial or ethnic spirit.

Morey’s discussion of the Utrecht Psalter was the most comprehensive, and stressed two facets of artistic modernity: realism and expressionism. In his evaluation, these two concepts were interconnected. His application of realism referred to the representation of everyday elements that conveyed a sense of reality, noting that “the style is also the beginning of European realism: for the first time a Christian theme is couched in really concrete terms, and the illustrator is at one with the infinitudes that it implies.”<sup>51</sup> Expressionism for him characterized the manner in which the images were executed, including line quality, and also their compositional structure, which he described as “utterly without symmetry or rhythm . . . spreading beyond the bounds that limited archetypal illustration, and held together solely by an intense animation.”<sup>52</sup> In his summary of the manuscript’s visual elements, Morey claimed that “such powerful expression of the barbarian genius could not fail to supplant the earlier Carolingian passive assimilation of the antique.”<sup>53</sup> His assertions connecting the Utrecht Psalter to the modern were reinforced by the unusual approach to illustrations used in *Mediaeval Art*. The volume included many photographic im-

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<sup>48</sup> Robb and Garrison, *Art of the Western World*, 461.

<sup>49</sup> Robb and Garrison, *Art of the Western World*, 462.

<sup>50</sup> Stites, *The Arts and Man*, 376.

<sup>51</sup> Morey, *Mediaeval Art*, 206.

<sup>52</sup> Morey, *Mediaeval Art*, 206.

<sup>53</sup> Morey, *Mediaeval Art*, 206.



**Fig. 13.4:** Drawing after a detail of the original image for Psalm 11 from the Utrecht Psalter as illustrated in Morey, *Mediaeval Art*, 1942. Photo: Author.

ages, but also incorporated over 160 line drawings made from photographs of the original medieval works that Morey discussed in the publication.<sup>54</sup>

One of these copied images accompanied his analysis of the Utrecht Psalter: a vignette depicting a portion of the illustration for Psalm 11 (Fig. 13.4). In this drawing, copied after the manuscript's original half-page image, Christ, the angels, and standing figures have been greatly simplified and rendered using heavy contour lines. The result is a visual aesthetic that more closely resembles a modern *New Yorker* cartoon instead of capturing the delicate, feathery quality of the drawings that is characteristic of the images in the original manuscript (Fig. 13.5). The Carolingian original employed contour lines, but they vary from lightweight to heavy, observable in the depictions of the figures and small plants that dot the hilltop. The modern associations reinforced by the drawings commissioned by Morey and the publishers for *Mediaeval Art* also found their way into his descriptive analysis of the Utrecht Psalter's images. In his overview of the manuscript, Morey explained that "The formulae employed by the

<sup>54</sup> Conant, "Review," 366.



**Fig. 13.5:** Psalm 11 from the Utrecht Psalter, Utrecht, Utrecht University Library, Ms. 32, fol. 6v. Photo: Utrecht University Library.

Psalter's draftsmen may be basically Greek; their use was new and Frankish. All of the antique reserve disappears in a wave of expressionism; for the first time in European art the artist *feels* as well as *sees* his subject."<sup>55</sup> Morey, along with his colleagues Robb and Garrison, effectively located the modern concept of the sympathetic artist in the Carolingian past (Fig. 13.5).

## A Middlebrow Early Middle Ages

Historiographic examinations of art history, including this one, often center on the networks and publications of scholars working at elite institutions. The first generation of survey texts helped expand art-historical studies in higher education and prioritized narratives about Charlemagne that presented him and his immediate successors as champions of progress. Outside of formal educational settings, the American cultural ambient also stressed the informal study of the visual arts as an improving activity

<sup>55</sup> Morey, *Mediaeval Art*, 204–5; emphasis Morey.

with cultural, social, and even patriotic ramifications.<sup>56</sup> During the Progressive Era, middle-class readers were encouraged to learn from studying the arts. Late nineteenth-century publications such as those by Clara Waters cultivated the study of art history as a leisure activity, advocated for travel as well as visits to art museums, and, in turn, built a culture to support those institutions.<sup>57</sup> The role of the arts as personal enrichment was not limited to those with the means to travel. Notably, social reformers strategically distributed black-and-white reproductions of famous works in European museum collections to people living in tenement neighborhoods in hopes of fostering an appreciation for fine art instead of more accessible (and brightly colored) commercial images.<sup>58</sup> The impetus was to improve the taste, and presumably the lives, of working-class Americans. These efforts at cultural awareness were often stymied by individuals who preferred to maintain their own standards, rather than adopt the preferences imposed by the reformers.<sup>59</sup> Within these domestic practices of individual and cultural improvement, Charlemagne had a remarkable role to play.

Art historians' characterizations of the emperor as an early medieval precursor of modernity were not limited to the university environment. In the first decades of the twentieth century, his image and biography were deployed in publications and media with a frequency that clearly expected people living in the United States to have at the minimum a basic familiarity with the monarch. American popular culture from the interwar years shared with academic culture an enthusiasm for Charlemagne as an exemplar of American values. For example, in 1924, Thomas Bullfinch's *Legends of Charlemagne*, based on the twelfth-century *Song of Roland*, was issued in a version for young readers. Featuring several full-color illustrations by the painter N. C. Wyeth, this commission was typical for the artist who had previously illustrated adventure novels such as James Fenimore Cooper's *The Deerslayer* and Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Wyeth was also known for his depictions of medieval topics including Robin Hood and King Arthur.

In the *Legends of Charlemagne*, most of the images portrayed scenes with young knights, but for the title page Wyeth depicted Charlemagne as an intense, blonde, blue-eyed, aging warrior (Fig. 13.6). Wearing (what was wrongly believed to be) his imperial crown, and holding his sword, the monarch presents the pommel and grip in a cross-like fashion.<sup>60</sup> The "portrait" is surrounded by an elaborate gold frame deco-

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<sup>56</sup> Jaffee, "'Gardner' Variety Formalism," 210.

<sup>57</sup> Amy M. Von Lintel, "Clara Waters and the Popular Audiences for Art History in Nineteenth-Century America," *The Princeton University Library Chronicle* 75, no. 1 (2013): 38–64, at 48–49.

<sup>58</sup> Katharine Martinez, "At Home with Mona Lisa: Consumer and Commercial Visual Culture, 1880–1920," in *Seeing High & Low: Representing Social Conflict in American Culture*, ed. Patricia Johnston (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006): 160–76, at 166.

<sup>59</sup> Martinez, "At Home with Mona Lisa," 173.

<sup>60</sup> For more on this crown in the first half of the twentieth century, see the Introduction to this volume.





**Fig. 13.6:** N. C. Wyeth, *Charlemagne*, from Bulfinch, *Legends of Charlemagne*, 1924.  
Photo: Author.





**Fig. 13.7:** Albrecht Dürer, *Charlemagne*, engraving from Russell, *Charlemagne: First of the Moderns*, 1930. Photo: iStock.com ZU\_09.



**Fig. 13.8:** Trading card with Charlemagne, Ogden's Tobacco Company, 1924. New York Public Library, George Arents Collection. Photo: New York Public Library.

rated with cabochon gemstones; clearly inspired by early medieval reliquaries, it reinforces the imposing characterization. The origins of Wyeth's depiction ultimately go back to Albrecht Dürer's historicizing portrait of 1512 for the Nuremberg Treasury.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, engravings of this painting were regularly reprinted in American trade publications such as historical biographies and in books for young readers (Fig. 13.7).<sup>61</sup> Alternately, the American artist may have based his illustration on mechanically reproduced commercial images such as a trading card from the *Leaders of Men* series printed for Ogden's Tobacco Company in 1924 (Fig. 13.8).<sup>62</sup> Charlemagne's significance as a cultural model and moral guide was reiterated in the preface to Bullfinch's book. Cultivating a familiarity with

<sup>61</sup> Examples include Charles Edward Russell, *Charlemagne: First of the Moderns* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1930), n.p. and John H. Haaren and A. B. Poland, *Famous Men of the Middle Ages* (New York: American Book Company, 1904), 110.

<sup>62</sup> For an analysis of French and German depictions of Charlemagne in scholastic and commercial publications, see Bernhard Jussen, "Between Ideology and Technology: Charlemagne in Modern

tales about him and the early Middle Ages was promoted as a meaningful endeavor, for “a young person will more frequently need an acquaintance with the creations of fancy than with the discoveries of science or the speculations of philosophy.”<sup>63</sup> Taking the message a step further, the author then assured the reader of the culturally improving nature of the text by explaining that “some knowledge of these things is expected of every well-educated young person.”<sup>64</sup>

The potential for this book to shape American youth extended beyond leisure reading into the library and schoolroom. The 1922 edition of *The Legends of Charlemagne* was included on lists of books approved by librarians and professors, who confidently affirmed that this literature could be placed in the hands of young readers to ensure that “taste is cultivated, . . . manners corrected, . . . knowledge broadened.”<sup>65</sup> In 1933, the state curriculum for Minnesota recommended Wyeth’s edition as a reference for a history unit titled “Hero Stories of the Nations.” The report explained “that pupils should be *naturally* interested in the heroes of the countries from which their parents or ancestors came.”<sup>66</sup> Students could create pageants from lists of illustrious figures from European and American history such as Charlemagne, George Washington, and Abraham Lincoln. Possible themes included a “Dramatization of a gathering of heroes in an international Valhalla” or a “Presentation of claims to place in a hall of fame a favorite hero.”<sup>67</sup> Clearly, Charlemagne’s benefit to American youth extended beyond the acquisition of facts about his life and reign. Such exercises presented these heroes, including the Carolingian emperor, as having a natural affiliation with American students, who presumably could connect with a specific ethnic heritage or be ready to immerse themselves into the narrative arc of European history. Charlemagne thus became an exemplar to be performed in the company of American historical figures in order to promote the imagined continuity between a heroic early medieval Germanic past and its manifestation in modern America.

In addition to providing a model for American youth, Charlemagne was employed in marketing campaigns aimed at American men in the early decades of the twentieth century. As in the schoolroom lessons, the ruler was characterized as worthy of admiration and emulation. This tactic followed trends in advertising of the time as companies, seeking Depression-era consumers, shifted their messaging toward themes that

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Times” in *The Making of Medieval History*, ed. Graham A. Loud and Martial Staub (Rochester: Boydell Press, 2017): 126–62.

<sup>63</sup> Thomas Bullfinch, *Legends of Charlemagne* (New York: Cosmopolitan Book Publishers Corp., 1924), v.

<sup>64</sup> Bullfinch, *Legends*, vi.

<sup>65</sup> “One Hundred Story Books for Children Between the Ages of Eight and Fourteen,” *The Bookman: A Review of Books and Life*, 56, no. 3 (November 1922): 366–67, at 366.

<sup>66</sup> *Curriculum for Seventh and Eighth Grades in the Ungraded Elementary Schools* (St. Paul: Minnesota Department of Education, 1933), 168; emphasis mine.

<sup>67</sup> *Curriculum*, 168.

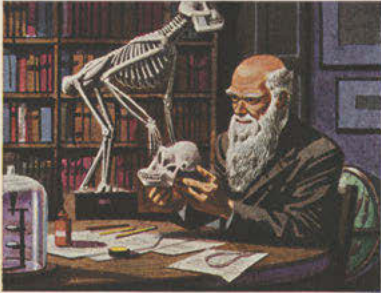
**According to**  
**Charlemagne**  
**Leonardo da Vinci**  
**Charles Darwin**



**1. CHARLEMAGNE** believed that only *by constant study* could a man become a good ruler and a wise man. He brought Alcuin, the greatest teacher of the age, to his court to instruct him and the nobility in civil law and statesmanship. And in his zeal to learn everything with all speed, he even mastered a form of shorthand.



**2. LEONARDO DA VINCI** also felt that continual study was the road to perfection. To improve his painting, he studied the science of optics and even dissected the human body. He had great contempt for painters who lacked knowledge of anatomy and he said that the nude figures they drew looked like sacks of walnuts.



**3. CHARLES DARWIN** was one of the most patient students of all time. For 20 years he worked night and day reading and collecting experimental proof for his monumental work on evolution, *The Origin of Species*. He once said, "When I am obliged to give up observation and experiment, I shall die."



**4. THE FACT** that a man should perfect himself in his craft *by constant study* applies to insurance men, too.

For this reason, The Travelers has established schools where representatives can take free courses covering all types of insurance; and regularly The Travelers Companies inform agents and brokers about developments in the insurance business.

Thus, The Travelers men acquire a far broader knowledge of insurance than they could acquire in the school of experience alone; and this knowledge can be of great help to you.

Moral: Insure in The Travelers. All forms of insurance. The Travelers Insurance Company, The Travelers Indemnity Company, The Travelers Fire Insurance Company, Hartford, Connecticut.

Fig. 13.9: Travelers Insurance advertisement, 1940. Photo: Author.

stressed the importance of purchasing goods focused on self-improvement.<sup>68</sup> In just such a campaign for Travelers Insurance, the Holy Roman Emperor was enlisted as a precursor to and a model for the modern insurance salesman (Fig. 13.9). Printed in 1940, the first image in this multipanel spread depicted a golden-haired king seated on his throne and attentively listening by candlelight to a lecture delivered by Alcuin. The tutor, dressed in quasi-Renaissance garments, holds a modern pointer in front of a teaching chart covered with script. The text box below informed the reader that “CHARLEMAGNE believed that only *by constant study* could a man become a good ruler and wise man,” noting that the monarch had Alcuin instruct “him and the nobility in civil law and statesmanship.” The section’s closing sentence asserted that “in his zeal to learn everything with all speed, he even mastered a form of shorthand.” Subsequent panels depicted the innovative thinkers Leonardo da Vinci and Charles Darwin directing their energies toward careful study. The concluding image showed an insurance agent dressed in suit and tie seated at a desk under a reading lamp. King of his own castle, self-reliant and diligently studying, the salesman updates his command of policy to improve his business acumen. The text informed the reader that this industriousness is expected, noting that “THE FACT that a man should perfect himself in his craft *by constant study* applies to insurance men, too.” Later in the passage the reader is reminded, “Thus, The [sic] Travelers men acquire a far broader knowledge of insurance than they could acquire in the school of experience alone; and this knowledge can be of great help to you.” The visual sequence is deliberate; the warring monarch, tempered with tutoring from an English cleric, is the early medieval counterpart to the modern American salesman whose balance of lived experience with rigorous study is a recipe for the American dream.

Charlemagne was also used in advertisements that capitalized on associations with his military leadership. In 1937, he was the focus of a national print campaign for Anheuser-Busch’s Budweiser beer (Fig. 13.10).<sup>69</sup> This image had wide distribution in newspapers and magazines, including a full-page reproduction in *LIFE*, one of the most popular weekly news, photo, and culture publications in the United States at the time.<sup>70</sup> That same year, members of the American Legion and veterans of World War I would have seen the advertisement in the program for their national convention held in New York City.<sup>71</sup> Oliphant raised, Charlemagne rallies his armor-clad warriors and the band advances, following several hounds. This detailed, if confusing, scene simultaneously evokes all manner of masculine pursuits such as a hunting party, military skirmish, and chivalric tournament. The accompanying text also blends genres,

<sup>68</sup> Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity 1920–1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 87.

<sup>69</sup> *LIFE*, 25 October 1937, 12.

<sup>70</sup> Erika Doss, “Introduction,” in *Looking at LIFE Magazine*, ed. Doss (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001): 1–24, at 2.

<sup>71</sup> *New York National Guardsman*, September 1937, n.p.



## He took his brewery with him

**MAKE THIS TEST!**  
 DRINK Budweiser FOR FIVE DAYS.  
 ON THE SIXTH DAY TRY TO DRINK  
 A SWEET BEER • YOU WILL WANT  
 Budweiser's FLAVOR THEREAFTER.

AS YOU LIKE IT



In Bottles

In Cans

Order a carton for your home  
 NO DEPOSIT REQUIRED

*The Emperor Charlemagne* had to be a traveling man to build his empire. Although beer was already well established in Europe in 800 A.D., Charlemagne refused to experiment with local brews. He took his brewmaster with him... Today there is one beer known to travelers the world around. They know it to be always good. They know it to be always uniform. They know it is BUDWEISER.

*Most people know* that fine beer is always thoroughly aged, but few people know that barley from which it is made must be aged too. This permits Nature to effect certain valuable chemical changes. All barley for BUDWEISER is thoroughly seasoned in modern, ventilated elevators in our own plant before it is malted.

*Robert Heine*  
 PRESIDENT

ANHEUSER-BUSCH • ST. LOUIS

# Budweiser

KING OF BOTTLED BEER

ANHEUSER-BUSCH • ST. LOUIS



Fig. 13.10: Budweiser advertisement from *LIFE*, 25 October 1937. Photo: Author.

pairing an anecdote from the monarch's biography with modern consumerism. The headline declared, "He took his brewery with him!" and a banner below the image invited the customer to take a taste test. After drinking Budweiser, "a sweet beer" will be unpalatable. A short paragraph explained that Charlemagne's exacting taste for a

quality beer prompted him to bring the royal brew master along when expanding his empire. Combined, the visual and textual characterizations reinforce a heroic expansionist role for Charlemagne as enforcer of cultural cohesion, while positioning the emperor as a man of discerning taste.

These images do not share a visual aesthetic with the arts of the early Middle Ages, but they do share an ideological imperative with the characterizations of early medieval art employed by Morey and his peers. The portrayals of Charlemagne in these popular works integrate text and image to portray the monarch as one who harnessed the power of a Germanic spirit through education and moderation as a model for American success. Deeply embedded in the American imagination, this characterization also was used by academics as they situated the Carolingian era as pivotal to changes in medieval European culture and as instrumental to modernity. Morey expressed this sentiment directly in the introduction to *Mediaeval Art*, writing that the art of the Middle Ages “added to the antique inheritance, and passed on to modern times.”<sup>72</sup>

This trajectory that situated medieval art as a direct precursor to the early twentieth century was shared with a popular culture that positioned Charlemagne as a figure of rational discernment and a predecessor for modern America. Whether through formal education, independent learning, or at leisure, twentieth-century Americans consumed the early Middle Ages as a potent form of cultural currency.<sup>73</sup> The model proved flexible; it could be applied to the aspiring student of art history, the youthful reader who benefitted from reading about and performing a heroic early Middle Ages, the insurance salesman hoping for professional success and his next gray flannel suit, or the modern drinker giving careful thought to the selection of a quality beer.

## Return to the Present

In a world of digitized books, the publications by Morey and his peers never really disappear. Their messages of Germanic and Teutonic power find new readers in the digital realm accessed, fully or in part, through web repositories such as the Internet Archive. This multimedia digitized library states that its mission is to provide “Universal Access to all Knowledge.”<sup>74</sup> In addition to current publications, digitized versions of Morey’s *Mediaeval Art* are available there, as are numerous editions of Gardner

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<sup>72</sup> Morey, *Mediaeval Art*, 17.

<sup>73</sup> Although it focuses on the role of Merovingian history in early American society, Gregory I. Halfond’s recent book employs an integrative approach similar to mine. See especially his chapter “Schoolbooks and the Teaching of Merovingian History” in *Writing About the Merovingians in the Early United States* (York: Arc Humanities Press, 2023).

<sup>74</sup> “About the Internet Archive,” Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/about/>.



and the now unfamiliar survey textbooks by Robb and Garrison, Cheney, and Stites. In the virtual environment, racialized language, such as that about the Germanic spirit, lives on, decontextualized and present for readers who may not be aware of, or who choose to perpetuate, the charged legacy of these approaches.

Digitized mass-market publications are also available in the sphere of educational projects such as the Heritage History website. The welcome page identifies its audience as “History Lovers and Homeschoolers.”<sup>75</sup> The organization presents its mission as a counterpoint for and in opposition to Social Studies or, in their terms, “analytical or critical” approaches used in the contemporary public-school classroom. It asserts that the purpose is not political but to alleviate boredom and revive the role of narrative history with a focus on the study of heroes.<sup>76</sup> On the website, one encounters language that lithely slips between promotion of hero narratives coded to spark young people’s enthusiasm and curricular structures that divide pre- and early modern history into Christian Europe, the British Middle Ages, and Spanish Europe.<sup>77</sup> The site’s library contains no fewer than eleven digitized books for young people published between 1910 and 1925 that reinforce tropes of Charlemagne as the wise, barbarian king. Bullfinch’s text is not among them, but other volumes, such as George P. Upton’s 1910 translation of Ferdinand Schmidt’s *Charlemagne*, used a similar approach. The translator’s preface for the American edition sounds all too familiar; not only did the emperor pursue his life with “activity and energy,” he was an excellent administrator, noble and wise. “As one of the most conspicuous figures in history, the events of his life as narrated in this volume deserve careful study at the hands of youth.”<sup>78</sup> The website and its content makes virtually present, *here and now*, the essentializing lens that informed the 1930s approaches used in *Mediaeval Art*, the survey texts, and product advertisements.

When considering the afterlives of these early publications, it is wise to remember that the authors, including Morey and his students, who established the canon for early medieval art, are distanced from our era by only one, or at most two, generations. Their approaches still echo in recent editions of *Gardner’s Art through the Ages*, now edited by Fred Kleiner. In its sixteenth edition, the contemporary presentation of the Utrecht Psalter is representative of the enduring legacy of the treatments employed in earlier survey textbooks. The author’s discussion includes welcome additions that address the role of materials and the challenges posed by the word-image relationship in the manuscript.<sup>79</sup> These are all important points of context, but a close reading of the

75 Heritage History, <https://www.heritage-history.com/index.php>.

76 “The Heritage History Mission,” Heritage History, [https://www.heritage-history.com/index.php?c=library&s=info-dir&f=history\\_mission](https://www.heritage-history.com/index.php?c=library&s=info-dir&f=history_mission).

77 “Heritage History Mission.”

78 George P. Upton, *Charlemagne* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1910), vi.

79 Fred S. Kleiner, *Gardner’s Art through the Ages: A Global History*, 16<sup>th</sup> edition (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2020), 331.

*Gardner's* text reveals descriptive language that should give the reader pause. A rich, clear, color image of the illustration for Psalm 43 has replaced the grimy plate of the same drawing that Morey used in his original *Series K* for University Prints and in *Mediæval Art* (see Fig. 13.3). The accompanying text explains that the figures “move and gesticulate with nervous energy.” In the elaboration on the image for Psalm 23, the author notes that the scene is “brought to life by the nervous energy of the figures and the landscape setting that seems also to be in constant movement.”<sup>80</sup> These descriptions are a disconcerting point of continuity with the language employed in the early corpus of survey textbooks. Later, when comparing the Psalter's illustrations to those in the Ebbo Gospels (ca. 825), the author repeats the emotive characterizations of human figures and even the landscape stating: “The bodies of the Utrecht Psalter figures are tense, with shoulders hunched and heads thrust forward. As in the Ebbo Gospels, even the earth heaves up around the figures.”<sup>81</sup> The repeated use of the words *nervous* and *energy* relies upon the early discussions by Gardner, Morey, Robb and Garrison, and Stites. The language of spirited energy persists, even as the racialized modifiers of Germanic and Teutonic have been stripped away. The methodological approaches used by the early twentieth-century authors continue to define how the drawings in the Utrecht Psalter are communicated to readers. Are these figures depicted as if they possess nervous energy? Why not curiosity, contemplation, or awe? The historic and contemporary descriptions of the images in Utrecht Psalter prompt reconsideration of art-historical language and its legacies. At first glance, the phrases appear standardized, even neutral, but closer examination of the context for their original use reveals the charged history of those conventions.

Returning to the 1942 advertisement and its summary, what can this decades-old volume tell us about approaching early medieval art in the current moment? Morey and his publisher claimed that “MEDIAEVAL ART traces the changes in politics, society, and thought that parallel these developments,” a promise that holds true if one situates Morey's American vision of the early Middle Ages within its broader cultural context. That same vision also was broadly disseminated by Gardner, Robb and Garrison, Cheney, and Stites. *As scholars and educators, it is incumbent upon us to do more than* replace older approaches with new and presumably improved ones. Instead, we must grapple responsibly with art history's place in the complicated narratives of American culture building. Our predecessors' efforts in shaping medieval art history for students and general readers were not isolated to academic pursuits; these art-historical publications shared ideologies with popular culture visions of a particular modern American identity that, however surprisingly, was securely tethered to a Carolingian past.

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<sup>80</sup> Kleiner, *Gardner's*, 332.

<sup>81</sup> Kleiner, *Gardner's*, 332.



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