

Heritage Preservation, Nationalism and the Reconstruction of Historical Monuments in Germany during the Long Nineteenth Century

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In the course of the nineteenth century, the predominant politics of heritage conservation strongly promoted the reconstruction of historical monuments. A new historical landscape was constructed, which became part of the popular image of German history, and which helped shape German collective memory. Different periods of German history each interpreted the historical monuments and their message anew. The monuments acted as reservoirs of memory for different social groups and generations. As landmarks, historical sites and tourist destinations, they became part of popular history and worked their way into the histories of individual families, and thus remained core components of German collective memory. The popular image of the past survived even the great historical ruptures that ensued in the twentieth century. The paper explores these notions first by means of a survey of individuals, organisations and ideas involved in historically orientated movements in nineteenth-century Germany. It then discusses core features and representative cases of historical restoration in practice, and finally focuses on one specific example: the Hohkönigsburg in Alsace-Lorraine.

There is a relatively widespread view that pre-modern German history is still inscribed in the country's present-day landscape, a landscape characterised by old towns with narrow cobbled lanes, fountains, ancient houses, medieval castles, impressive churches and cathedrals, located in picturesque river valleys and dark forests. These alleged traces of a pre-modern past appear to have survived, at least in part, the radical social and economic changes of the nineteenth century, with its rapid growth in population, the Industrial Revolution and urbanisation. According to the view referred to above, the advance of modernisation threatened Germany's

historical heritage, such as buildings, city walls and old town centres, as well as the country's customs and traditions, and it was only the commitment of art historians, conservators and other intellectuals that guaranteed the survival of at least the most important monuments of history and culture in the nineteenth century. This assessment, then, defines the history of modernisation as a history of loss, with the idea of a national heritage having been devised to compensate for these losses.¹

In this paper, I will make a contrary argument. In my view, the history of Germany in the nineteenth century is less a story of loss than a story of construction. It was not only *modern* Germany that was shaped in the nineteenth century, but also the historical landscape of *pre-modern* Germany as we know it today: a landscape of old churches, castles and towns. Historical Germany is an invention of the nineteenth century and of its imagination. Indeed, this applies even to the country's natural landscape: the notion of the river Rhine and its valley, for example, as a site of longing (*Sehnsuchtsort*), a site of nature and nostalgia, was formed in the nineteenth century. To a degree, ideas around national heritage and the preservation of monuments served to strengthen people's sense of national identity and community, while also intensifying their identification with specific regions. Both the former and the latter contributed to the creation of a national landscape and a national memory.

I will explore these notions first by means of a survey of individuals, organisations and ideas involved in historically orientated movements and initiatives in nineteenth-century Germany, then go on to discuss core features and representative cases of historical restoration in practice. After focusing on one specific example, the Hohkönigsburg (Haut-Kœnigsbourg) in Alsace-Lorraine, I will, by way of conclusion, comment on further developments in regard to these issues in the twentieth century.

Constructing history in the landscape: Ideas, people, organisations

German interest in heritage policy and the preservation of monuments had its societal basis in a broad range of associations and organisations founded in the course of the nineteenth century. Among them were historical associations, the *Heimat* movement and organisations that promoted tourism.

Historical associations (*Geschichtsvereine*),² most of which were founded and based in the capitals of the German states, were often initiated and joined by people with academic backgrounds, such as secondary school teachers, archivists,

1 See, for example, R. P. Siefert, *Fortschrittsfeinde? Opposition gegen Technik und Industrie von der Romantik bis zur Gegenwart*. Munich: Beck, 1984.

2 H. Heimpel, *Geschichtsvereine einst und jetzt*. – H. Boockmann et al., *Geschichtswissenschaft und Vereinswesen im 19. Jahrhundert. Beiträge zur Geschichte historischer Forschung in Deutschland*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972, pp. 45–73; G. B. Clemens, *Sanctus amor patriae. Eine vergleichende Studie zu deutschen und italienischen Geschichtsvereinen im 19. Jahrhundert*. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2004; G. Kunz, *Verortete Geschichte. Regionales Geschichtsbewußtsein in den deutschen Historischen Vereinen des 19. Jahrhunderts*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000.

librarians and university teachers. These associations' field of work was their home regions or local areas, or the states in which they were located. Their activities, in response to the great changes that had taken place in Napoleonic Germany, represented attempts to reveal the pre-modern roots of regional history and to strengthen the identities of the German states to which those activities related, such as Bavaria, Prussia and Hesse-Kassel. Most of the associations were rather conservative in their outlook, with close adherence to the territories and heritages they represented. In the early period of the *Geschichtsvereine*, during the first half of the nineteenth century, there were no national historical associations; the existing associations' activities rarely transcended the boundaries of the regions with which they were concerned. There were only a few examples of trans-regional cooperation, and it was not until 1852 that an umbrella organisation, the *Gesamtverein der deutschen Geschichts- und Altertumsvereine*, was founded, heralding the emergence of a culture of nationwide communication on the history of Germany.

The practical work of these historical associations revolved around the search for traces and sources of regional history. The associations initiated, for example, editions of written sources. They sought to locate archaeological artefacts and were engaged in the protection of exceptionally significant monuments. Above all, they tried to shape the physical landscapes of the states to which they were dedicated and give them the appearance of historical landscapes full of traces of a great past. These historical associations, then, were reflections of the self-confidence and the sense of pride of regional elites as well as their claim to be representative of their regions or states.

Unlike the historical associations, the 'homeland movement' (*Heimatbewegung*)³ was based in smaller towns. Its members were mostly of middle-class origin, with primary and secondary school teachers, pastors and small merchants among them. The *Heimat* associations emerged in the 1880s and 1890s, after the foundation of the German Empire in 1871. They did not engage in history on the level of the state; instead, they were interested in regional and local history, social and cultural history, and the traditions and customs of their home regions. They pursued an interdisciplinary approach to history and tradition, engaging in history, *Volkskunde* (essentially ethnology), language and dialect studies, architecture and even psychology. They aimed at a holistic understanding of history and society, and the revitalisation of traditions, such as the use of traditional costumes (*Trachten*). The movement had links to other movements which were critical of Western civilisation and industrial society, particularly the *Lebensreform* and youth movements. The *Heimat* associations themselves exercised fundamental criticism of industrialisation and often rejected modernisation. Some members of the *Heimat* movement rejected

3 Cf. A. Knaut, *Zurück zur Natur! Die Wurzeln der Ökologiebewegung*. Greven: Kilda-Verlag, 1993; K. Ditt, *Die deutsche Heimatbewegung 1871-1945. - Heimat. Analysen, Themen, Perspektiven*. Eds. W. Cremer, A. Klein. (Schriftenreihe 294/1.) Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1990, pp. 135-154; Antimodernismus und Reform. *Zur Geschichte der deutschen Heimatbewegung*. Ed. E. Klueping. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1991; W. Speitkamp, *Die Verwaltung der Geschichte. Denkmalpflege und Staat in Deutschland 1871-1933*. (Kritische Studien zur Geschichtswissenschaft 114.) Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996, pp. 36-53, 119-137.

industrial modernisation wholesale, while others limited themselves to trying to improve society and life, and combating the negative consequences of industrialisation and urbanisation.

In 1904, a national union of German local and regional *Heimat* associations was founded, the *Deutscher Bund Heimatschutz*. There is still some debate as to the extent of the *Heimat* movement's ambitions in regard to German national history. On the one side of this debate, historians have stressed the regional work of the *Heimat* movement, whose local associations often focused on intensifying regional identity. Bitter conflict arose on occasion between local and regional *Heimat* associations on boundaries between regions and belongings, for example in Brunswick, Osnabrück, Münster and Hanover. On the other side, some historians have indicated that the ideological and institutional ties of the movement linked it to the national historical cause. These historians have further pointed out that the *Heimat* movement did not question national identity, but rather saw the nation as being built on regional identities⁴ and adhered to the leitmotif 'unity in diversity – diversity in unity' (*Einheit in der Vielfalt – Vielfalt in der Einheit*). Historians have referred to Germany around 1900, in terms of its national and regional identity, as a 'nation of provincials'.⁵ In fact, the *Heimat* movement did reinforce some of the ideas that characterised German nationalism of the time, such as the notion that ethnic ties, 'blood', should form the basis of regional as well as of national integration and identity, and that the soil of Germany was the basis of a collective German character.

One important issue occupying the *Heimat* movement was its rejection of historicism, particularly in architecture. The architect Paul Schultze-Naumburg, who for several years was the chairman of the German union of *Heimat* associations, published a famous series of volumes on *Kulturarbeiten*,⁶ in which he discussed the change in architectural landscapes in the course of modernisation. He contrasted the examples of older buildings, streets and places, which he labelled positive and 'good', with 'bad' new buildings and concepts of urban planning. A particular object of his criticism was the use of the historicist style in new buildings. In his view, people's construction abilities had declined since the 1820s and 1830s. Schultze-Naumburg hoped to revitalise a form of town planning and construction that made reference to past ages without simply restoring old buildings, by creating new buildings in traditional forms. His principal argument for this was his view that traditional ways of building houses corresponded to human needs for homes, and that buildings constructed in this way were preferable, not only from an aesthetic point of view but also in the light of functional considerations. Following his lead, the *Heimat* movement preferred, for example, steeply slanting roofs and fought the introduction of the flat roof.

During the nineteenth century, the individual German states began to install official administrations for the protection of monuments (*Denkmalschutz*); the first

4 See also U. Plath, *Heimat: Rethinking Baltic German Spaces of Belonging* in this volume.

5 C. Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat*. Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990. See also A. Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871–1918*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

6 P. Schultze-Naumburg, *Kulturarbeiten*. 9 vols. Munich: Callwey, 1902–1928.

conservators (sometimes called curators) took up their posts in Bavaria (1835), Prussia (1843), Baden (1853) and Württemberg (1858).⁷ Their duty was to provide advice on sites and monuments of outstanding historical significance, especially sites owned by churches, towns and the state. By the end of the century, all German states had set up administrations for *Denkmalschutz*. Urbanisation had led to an increased awareness of the value of historic buildings, and new laws widened official powers with regard to control over monuments of culture and history and influence on town planning. The laws, however, only covered public sites and monuments, not extending to private property.

The end of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of a Germany-wide debate on the principles of preservation and restoration, and of new national institutions in this field.⁸ Examples are the monument preservation conference *Tag für Denkmalpflege*, an annual national assembly of conservators, art historians, architects and public officials engaged in the protection of monuments, and such nationwide periodicals as *Die Denkmalpflege*. These institutions and publications served as a forum for innovation and debate. It is in this context that we come to the role of Germany's community of art historians and architects in the debate around the preservation of the country's physical heritage. Some of these professionals worked as conservators for the protection of monuments. They conducted the great debates of the time on *Denkmalwerte*, on the values surrounding monuments and sites of historical interest, and on the issue of conservation versus restoration.⁹

In the first half of the nineteenth century, 'protection of monuments' meant restoration or even reconstruction of castles, churches and ruins. The protection of buildings and works of art of outstanding significance was argued for and legitimised by citing testimonial, historical and aesthetic values which prescribed the ideal course of restoration processes. In the course of the century, the concept of *Denkmalwerte* was extended to additionally cover more modest buildings, such as small village churches and chapels, which began to enjoy protection as testimonials to middle-class or rural life. The notion took root that it was not only the monuments of monarchs, the nobility and the Church that merited protection, but also sites bearing witness to the everyday lives of ordinary people. At the same time, specialists in this area began to discuss what was referred to as the *Alterswert* (roughly 'age-related value') of buildings, a term whose field of reference extended beyond the romantic fascination with old castles and ruins set in picturesque landscapes. The idea of an *Alterswert* (coined by Alois Riegl) or *Stimmungswert* ('atmospheric value' - by Georg Hager) of monuments represented an attempt to emancipate the

7 W. Speitkamp, *Kulturpolitik unter dem Einfluß der Französischen Revolution: Die Anfänge der modernen Denkmalpflege in Deutschland*. - *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte* 1989, vol. 18, pp. 129-159; W. Speitkamp, *Verwaltung der Geschichte*, p. 228.

8 W. Speitkamp, *Verwaltung der Geschichte*, pp. 96-100. Cf. M. Mintaurs, *A Heritage for the Public? The Gesellschaft für Geschichte und Altertumskunde in Riga and the Protection of Architectural Monuments in the Baltic Provinces, 1834-1914* in this volume.

9 *Konservieren oder restaurieren? Zur Diskussion über Aufgaben, Ziele und Probleme der Denkmalpflege um die Jahrhundertwende*. Ed. M. Wohlleben. Zürich: Verlag der Fachvereine, 1989. For the modern concept of *Denkmalwerte*, see *Werte. Begründungen der Denkmalpflege in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. Eds. H.-R. Meier et al. Berlin: Jovis, 2013; *DENKmalWERTE. Beiträge zur Theorie und Aktualität der Denkmalpflege*. Eds. H.-R. Meier, I. Scheurmann. Berlin, Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2010.

Denkmal from its scholarly definitions; to reflect the fact that nature and culture, especially the work of human hands, are perishable and essentially transient. It called for the observer of a monument or site of historical significance to become aware of the atmosphere of monuments, of their living and dying. This principle precluded, to a substantial degree, interventions which aimed at the restoration of historic structures.

These changes and expansions in the ideas behind *Denkmalwerte* bore witness to a fundamental change in the understanding of history and tradition in German culture. We might interpret this change as a democratic one, in the sense that it meant that every object could become a historical monument, and that not only trained academics, but everyone was able to understand what gave a *Denkmal* its significance. We might also perceive it as a change linked to nationalist values: the nation as a social body was discovering its history, which was no longer merely the history of an elite, but the history of the whole people.

The introduction of these new ideas did not occur without significant controversy. The advocates of the notion of an *Alterswert* claimed that the protection of buildings of historical importance should stop at conservation, and viewed all attempts to restore or reconstruct buildings as an intervention into the nature of a transient monument – an intervention into history as a process of transience. This point of view, however, was to remain the view of a minority. The conservation of ruins might have been an attractive proposition to art historians and other intellectuals. From the point of view of the owner of a monument, only an ideal-type, harmonious restoration or indeed a reconstruction could guarantee that the historical monument exemplified the wealth, the power or the success of its owner. The Church, castle owners and urban administrations were thus firm supporters of restoration. Even at the beginning of the twentieth century, when the ideas of *Alterswert* and *Stimmungswert* had become widely accepted among intellectuals, the practice of the preservation of historical monuments was characterised by determined efforts to complete or reconstruct ruins and historic buildings following historical patterns and original plans.

Restoration: Examples and controversies

The nineteenth century gave birth to modern Germany. The German population increased from about twenty-two million people in the early nineteenth century to sixty-five million in 1910. In 1871 there were only eight cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants in Germany; in 1910 there were already forty-eight. Smaller towns amalgamated into bigger towns and such conurbations as the Ruhr region developed. New urban planning changed townscapes. Social reformers called for the demolition of old city centres for the improvement of living conditions and hygiene in the inner cities. Industrial zones and new tenement houses for workers were built. Urbanisation impacted both townscapes and landscape through coal

mining and new modes of transport, such as railways. Rivers were regulated to improve waterway traffic and to stop flooding. By the advent of modern tourism in the mid-nineteenth century, the German landscape had already irrevocably changed; the romantic ideas surrounding the Rhine intensified an image which had already been subject to manipulation. Mass tourism began in earnest at the end of the century, with short trips undertaken by groups, associations and trade unions on the river Rhine or to the Drachenfels near Königswinter.¹⁰ Such excursions introduced Germans to an artificial historical landscape via a specific visual impression of history.

For all their intensity, the intellectual debates on preservation and restoration of the nineteenth century did not, in fact, have any long-lasting effects on practices of restoration. One example in this regard is the German approach to sacred buildings – churches and particularly cathedrals – as *Denkmäler*. Several local and municipal initiatives engaged in the restoration, ‘purification’ and completion of German churches. In this respect the most important objects of restoration were the large cathedrals, many of which were the subjects of projects funded and carried out by church officials and public movements.¹¹ The aesthetic ideals of the time prescribed the restoration of cathedrals so that they would represent the true architectural style of their origins, or at least reflect their original plans. This meant that later additions, for example baroque elements in a gothic church, had to be removed. Houses and shops built close to the cathedrals frequently fell victim to demolition. Incomplete components of church and cathedral buildings, spires in particular, had to be finished in accordance with original plans. Even those churches whose spires were already finished underwent alterations where the spires did not fit into the aesthetic ideals of the age.

The most famous example in this regard is the cathedral in Cologne (Köln; fig. 1), which in the nineteenth century was completed according to medieval plans.¹² Shops and buildings in the immediate environs of the cathedral were removed, and the nave and the spires were completed. This took about forty years, from the 1840s to the 1880s. In the end, the cathedral stood free of surrounding buildings on a raised surface. Visible from far away, it resembled an imposing medieval cathedral.

A driving force behind the initiative to finish the Cologne cathedral was ongoing political and religious friction in Prussia. Reform movements had arisen in the Catholic Church; at the same time, the Prussian government in Berlin was asserting its authority. In the context of profound conflict between the Catholic Church and the Protestant state, each side sought to protect its autonomy. A mass pilgrimage to Trier (Treves) in 1844, in which nearly half a million people took part, demonstrated the devout Catholicism of broad swathes of people in Germany. Cologne’s cathedral brought together a diverse range of what we would today call stakeholders: the Catholic masses, the Prussian state, which sought to demonstrate its power, and

10 Rheinreise 2002. Der Drachenfels als romantisches Reiseziel. Bonn: Lempertz, 2002.

11 Cf. N. Borger-Keweloh, *Die mittelalterlichen Dome im 19. Jahrhundert*. Munich: Beck, 1986.

12 Cf. T. Nipperdey, *Der Kölner Dom als Nationaldenkmal*. – T. Nipperdey, *Nachdenken über die deutsche Geschichte*. Essays. Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1990, pp. 189–207.

romantic intellectuals, who admired medieval buildings within their landscapes. The cathedral became a repository of cultural memory. Strictly speaking, it was not a homogeneous site of memory, but rather a national *lieu de mémoire*,¹³ which provided a space for a number of different identities. There was a degree of dispute among art historians and conservators about the practical work of the reconstruction, but in the final analysis it was this cathedral which formed Germans' image of gothic buildings and of the glory of Church and state in the medieval age.

Not all of the restoration and reconstruction initiatives launched during the period were successful. In Strasbourg, the capital of the *Reichsland* Alsace-Lorraine, discussion arose as to whether the second spire of the cathedral should be completed. The debate took place against the backdrop of a belief among some that the Germans had destroyed the second spire in the war of 1870. During the 1870s, the German chancellor Otto von Bismarck requested that the administration of Alsace-Lorraine initiate the project. The intention behind this request was to demonstrate what the German Empire was able and ready to do for the population of Alsace-Lorraine and to emphasise the German claim to dominance in the *Reichsland*. The administration in Strasbourg declined to act on the request, arguing that a reconstruction of the spire would be interpreted by the citizens of Strasbourg as a hostile act and would turn the cathedral into a symbol of repression and foreign rule. In the end, the plan was not pursued.¹⁴

Another important example of restoration or indeed reconstruction projects in this era relates to the chain of castles situated in the German valley of the river Rhine. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, nearly all of them were in ruins. In the course of approximately two generations, several of them were reconstructed following the ideas of romanticism, with the aim of creating an image of a picturesque valley with its river, hills and castles. These reconstruction projects give us an impression of how people in the nineteenth century thought of the Middle Ages: a dark time replete with robber barons, violence and torture – an idea based in large part on the contemporary influence of romanticism. Travelogues by such romantic authors as Victor Hugo, who described the Rhine valley as an idyllic site, attracted other visitors, and increasing numbers of intellectuals travelled along the river. A further factor in the rise of idealised notions of the Rhine was its advancing political significance in the course of the nineteenth century, when issues relating to German borders and the question of whether the Rhine was a German river or whether it represented the western boundary of German territory led to repeated conflict with France. The Rhine Crisis of 1840, for example, saw a highly polarised and emotional debate between the German and the French people, which even gave rise to the danger of war between the two states. The reconstruction of the Rhine castles was, viewed in this context, as a demonstration of both German tradition and German hegemony: a demonstration, initiated by a Protestant Prussian

13 For the term see *Les Lieux de mémoire*. 3 vols. Ed. P. Nora. Paris: Gallimard, 1984–1992.

14 Cf. W. Speitkamp, *Vom deutschen Nationaldenkmal zum französischen Erinnerungsort: die Hohkönigsburg im Elsaß. – Marianne – Germania. Deutsch-französischer Kulturtransfer im europäischen Kontext 1789–1914*. Vol. 1. Eds. E. François et al. (Deutsch-französische Kulturbibliothek 10.) Leipzig: Leipziger Universität-Verlag, 1998, pp. 207–229.

government in Berlin, whose intended audience included the German Catholic public in the Rhineland.

The reconstruction initiatives were driven by an intermingling of political, personal and aesthetic motives. The Rheinstein and Stolzenfels castles, for example, reflected Prussian interest in the Rhine.¹⁵ The reconstruction of Rheinstein, beginning in 1825, was initiated by Prince Frederick of Prussia. Beginning in 1823 Stolzenfels was owned by the Prussian crown prince Frederick William, who had the famous Prussian architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel re-design it into a neo-gothic castle with elements of the English Tudor style. This had effects on other projects of restoration and reconstruction along the river Rhine, generating a specific style of castle. For generations thereafter, the image of the Rhine region thus created, with its vineyards, castles, ships and other landmarks, such as the famous Lorelei rock, attracted visitors from all over Germany and beyond. In fact, the romanticism of the Rhine, as it was imagined and formed in the nineteenth century, became a core element of the German national landscape and of the German national identity. It was not only the medieval castle that was effectively invented in the nineteenth century; perhaps paradoxically, the entire modern image of medieval Germany was formed in this age of industrialisation and of the emergence of the nation.

Let us turn now to one further example of the reconstruction of a castle on the Rhine during the long nineteenth century: the Marksburg, in today's state of Rhineland-Palatinate.¹⁶ The architect Bodo Ebhardt turned it into the centre of the German Castles Association (*Deutsche Burgenvereinigung*), which he founded in 1899 in order to do research on the architecture of medieval castles and to provide impetus for the reconstruction of ruins. Ebhardt was motivated by strong national sentiment. Like the emperor Wilhelm II, he aimed to provide an illustration of the rich medieval tradition, which he viewed as a forerunner of the second German Empire, founded in 1871. He devoted a great deal of his work to large reconstruction projects. The Marksburg was, at that time, the only castle in the middle Rhine valley which was neither in ruins nor already reconstructed following romantic principles. It represented an impressive historical site and was relatively easy for travellers to access. It is situated on the right bank of the Rhine, near the place where the river Lahn flows into the Rhine, close to the little town of Braubach. The members of the Castles Association felt that the Marksburg was an ideal base for the administration of its work and the presentation of a powerful image of medieval Germany. The Marksburg had retained its late medieval appearance; in effect, all Bodo Ebhardt did to the castle's fundamental structure was to raise its donjon somewhat in order to create an impressive and distinctive silhouette, giving the castle a distinctly medieval look. The interior of the castle underwent extensive

15 Cf. U. Rathke, *Preußische Burgenromantik am Rhein. Studien zum Wiederaufbau von Rheinstein, Stolzenfels und Sooneck (1823-1860)*. (Studien zur Kunst des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts 42.) Munich: Prestel, 1979.

16 M. Backes, B. von der Dollen, *Die Marksburg. Bau- und Kunstgeschichte einer rheinischen Burg. Restaurierungsmaßnahmen und Bauunterhaltung seit 1975*. 2nd ed. Braubach (Rhein): Deutsche Burgenvereinigung, 1993; R. Hiecke, M. Backes, *Die Marksburg*. 26th ed. (Grosse Baudenkmäler 134.) Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1996.

renovation: its rooms were equipped with several elements of what was supposed to have been medieval life. The great hall, the forge, the wine cellar and the torture chamber were all transformed in this way, thus generating a popular image of medieval life: knighthood, feasts and violence.

This popular image of the medieval age survived even the great historical ruptures that ensued in the twentieth century. Its persuasive effect was all the more pronounced due to the fact that the reconstructed medieval castles did not communicate an overt political message. The reconstructed buildings and monuments seemed to display nothing but high aesthetic qualities, which guaranteed their acceptance even after World War II and the turn away from national hubris it enforced. As landmarks, historic sites and tourist destinations, they became part of popular history and worked their way into the histories of individual families, and thus remained core components of German collective memory.¹⁷

We might sum up the development we have detailed here by stating that, in the course of the nineteenth century, the predominant politics of heritage conservation strongly promoted reconstruction. Through these reconstructions, politics acted to create a new historical landscape which became part of the popular image of German history and which helped shape German collective memory. Different periods of German history each interpreted the castles and their message anew. The castles acted as reservoirs of memory for different social groups and generations. This phenomenon was not restricted to these particular monuments: the enduring image of German medieval towns, too, was a creation of the nineteenth century. At the beginning of the century, population growth impelled a number of German towns to dismantle their medieval city walls and gates. From the 1860s to the 1890s, a broad discussion ensued as to how the old city centres should be dealt with. Their narrow streets and bad air were considered to be dangerous to the health of their inhabitants, and their half-timber houses fire risks. The urban planning of this era aimed at broad roads and avenues that could accommodate tram tracks. But in the 1880s and 1890s new movements campaigned for the conservation or reconstruction of historical fronts of buildings, marketplaces and other historic urban spaces. New laws against the 'deformation of the townscape' (*Verunstaltungsgesetze*) were passed. Competitions for facades (*Fassadenwettbewerbe*) were initiated to encourage the use of historical forms for houses and house-fronts; one example of their impact is the town of Hildesheim. Furthermore, architects exposed the old half-timber work on buildings (*Fachwerkfreilegung*) in several German towns to give town centres a picturesque appearance.¹⁸

One of the most famous instances of the practical realisation of such measures is the small Bavarian town of Rothenburg ob der Tauber, which during the nineteenth century was reinvented as a romantic German town.¹⁹ As the significance of Rothenburg as a tourist attraction and a site of a particular image of Germany

17 M. Fuhr, 'Wer will des Stromes Hüter sein?' 40 Burgen und Schlösser am Mittelrhein. Ein Führer. Regensburg: Schnell und Steiner, 2002.

18 Cf. W. Speitkamp, *Verwaltung der Geschichte*, pp. 107–108, 290–313.

19 Cf. J. Hagen, *Preservation, Tourism and Nationalism: The Jewel of the German Past*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006.

increased, controversies arose as to how to protect its walls, streets and houses. At the end of the nineteenth century, several suggestions were discussed regarding how the historic townscape might be added to in order to complete its medieval image and its facades. Sections of the town wall were restored, and new construction projects were urged to follow a medieval aesthetic. Around 1910, for example, the half-timber work of several houses was exposed in order to generate a more authentic medieval image, despite the fact that professional critics had opposed the measures. By this time, Rothenburg represented a mixture of old houses, renovated facades and new additions imitating the historical style. At the end of the German Empire, it was considered to be a typical medieval town and enjoyed the status of a national icon.

After World War II, during which over forty per cent of Rothenburg's historic centre had been destroyed, a large part of historic Rothenburg was reconstructed in the form that had taken shape in the early twentieth century. Today, tourists from all over the world, from Japan and the United States in particular, as well as from Germany, visit Rothenburg ob der Tauber, which draws over two and a half million visitors annually. These visitors are convinced that what is essentially a modern town in traditional wrapping is the epitome of a typical medieval German town. They see in Rothenburg a paradigmatic small German town, an exemplar of community, rooted in a sense of place and home, harmony between landscape and townscape, a national monument and a quintessentially German site of memory. In this way, the town is emblematic of the process in which, in about two generations, old Germany disappeared and a 'new old Germany' was created, a memory landscape taking the place of a historical landscape.

The Hohkönigsburg

The Hohkönigsburg castle in Alsace represents a highly significant example of a reconstruction project that doubled as an invention of a specific tradition, and continues to shape our current image of the medieval age. What makes this example so noteworthy is that this castle was originally reconstructed as a German national monument, yet is now seen as a French national monument. The Hohkönigsburg reveals that the imagination and invention of tradition is a highly arbitrary process.²⁰

The Hohkönigsburg is paradigmatic of a complete reconstruction of a medieval castle following a particular ideal (fig. 2). The intention of the German emperor Wilhelm II was for the castle to become a German national monument whose task would be to bear witness to the long-standing tradition of the Hohenzollern dynasty, and to strengthen German rule in Alsace-Lorraine by boosting the allegiance

20 For the history of the castle see W. Wiegand, *Zur Geschichte der Hohkönigsburg. Eine historische Denkschrift. Mit ausgewählten urkundlichen Beilagen*. Straßburg: Heitz, 1901; B. Ehardt, *Zur Baugeschichte der Hohkönigsburg*. Berlin: Krollmann, 1900; W. Speitkamp, *Vom deutschen Nationaldenkmal zum französischen Erinnerungsort*; W. Speitkamp, *Die Hohkönigsburg und die Denkmalpflege im Kaiserreich*. – *Neue Museumskunde* 1991, vol. 34, pp. 121–130; W. Speitkamp, *Hohkönigsburg bei Sélestat, Frankreich*. – *Geschichte der Rekonstruktion – Konstruktion der Geschichte*. Ed. W. Nerdinger et al. Munich: Prestel, 2010, pp. 271–274.

of the region's population, which remained resistant to German dominance. The plans for the castle envisaged it corresponding to the Marienburg (Malbork) in East Prussia, which was likewise restored in the nineteenth century in a project initiated by Prussian reformers.²¹ Like the Marienburg, the Hohkönigsburg was intended to become a fortification on the frontier and an everlasting symbol of German power and glory.

The Hohkönigsburg is situated at the edge of the Vosges at a height of 755 meters above the town of Sélestat (Schlettstatt). The existence of a fortification at this place is documented from the twelfth century onwards. The castle changed hands several times during its history; initially owned by the House of Hohenstaufen, it was later taken over by the dukes of Lorraine. In the mid-fifteenth century, robber knights occupied the castle, and in 1462 it was attacked and destroyed. The ruins were reconstructed, but the castle was destroyed again in 1633, during the Thirty Years War. In the period that followed, the local population used the ruins as a quarry. In 1865 the town of Sélestat acquired the ruins.

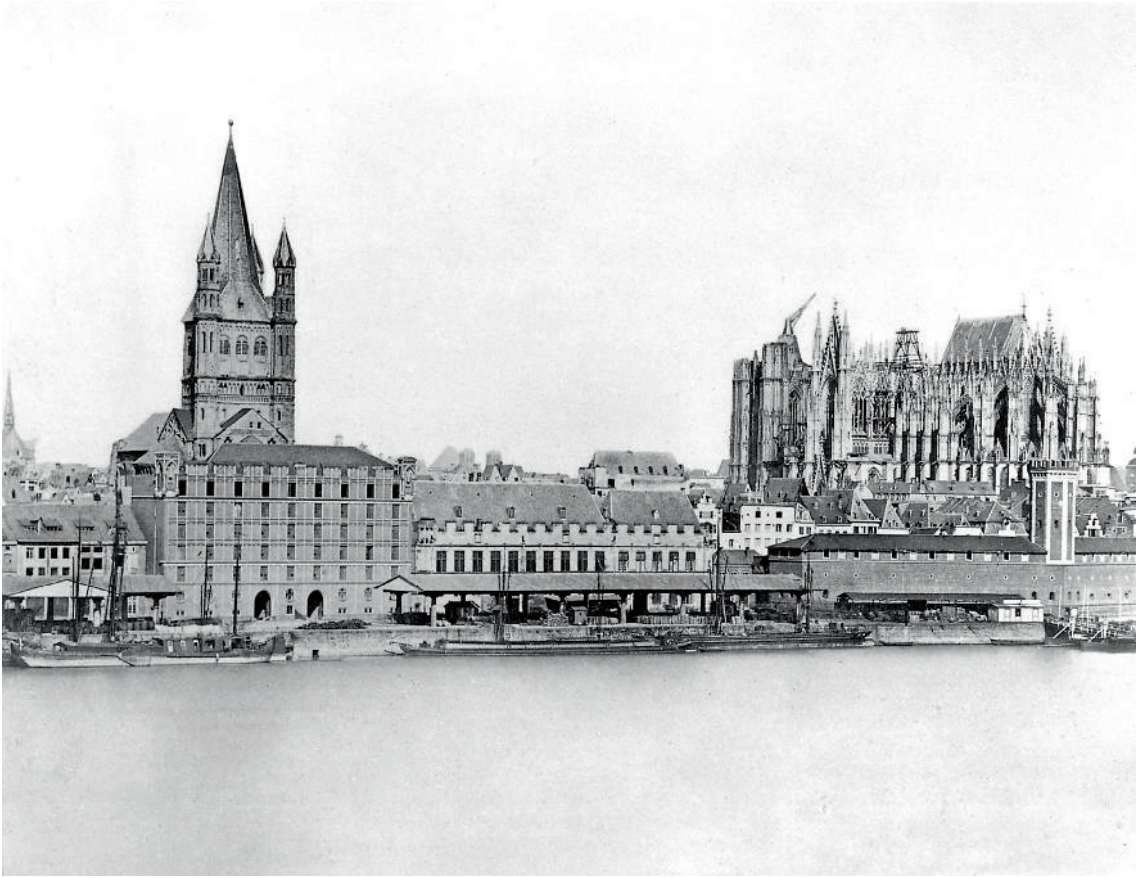
In the course of the nineteenth century, interest in the Hohkönigsburg arose anew. The ruins were located in an impressive mountain panorama. They evoked romantic sentiment and stood as a reminder of historical losses and the inevitable decline of glory and power. Nevertheless, the high cost of maintenance led the municipal government of Sélestat to attempt to sell the ruins. Finally, in 1899, the town donated them to the German emperor. Wilhelm II desired that the ruins become an emphatic document of German history, even German hegemony. The emperor charged the architect Bodo Ebhardt with the reconstruction of the Hohkönigsburg. Ebhardt aimed to reconstruct the castle in its late gothic state, the condition in which it had been in the late fifteenth century. He researched the relevant archives in order to find the original plans. He even travelled to France and visited the great reconstruction projects of the French architect Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc in Carcassonne, Pierrefonds and the Mont Saint-Michel in Normandy.²² Thus, ironically, his nation's enemy provided his model.

On this basis, Ebhardt began his reconstruction work, which essentially involved constructing a new building. When archive documents did not give sufficient information, he completed the medieval construction plans in an idealised manner in order to arrive at an integrated and harmonious whole. The outcome was a near-perfect gothic castle which had very little to do with the original structure. The finished castle was an impressive monument 250 metres in length. The new donjon was about 50 metres high. The castle had five gates, a dungeon (*Zwinger*), a water well, a mill, a moat, a draw bridge and even a zoo. It had everything an ideal medieval fortification might have possessed: an idealised monument which triggered the imaginations of visitors.

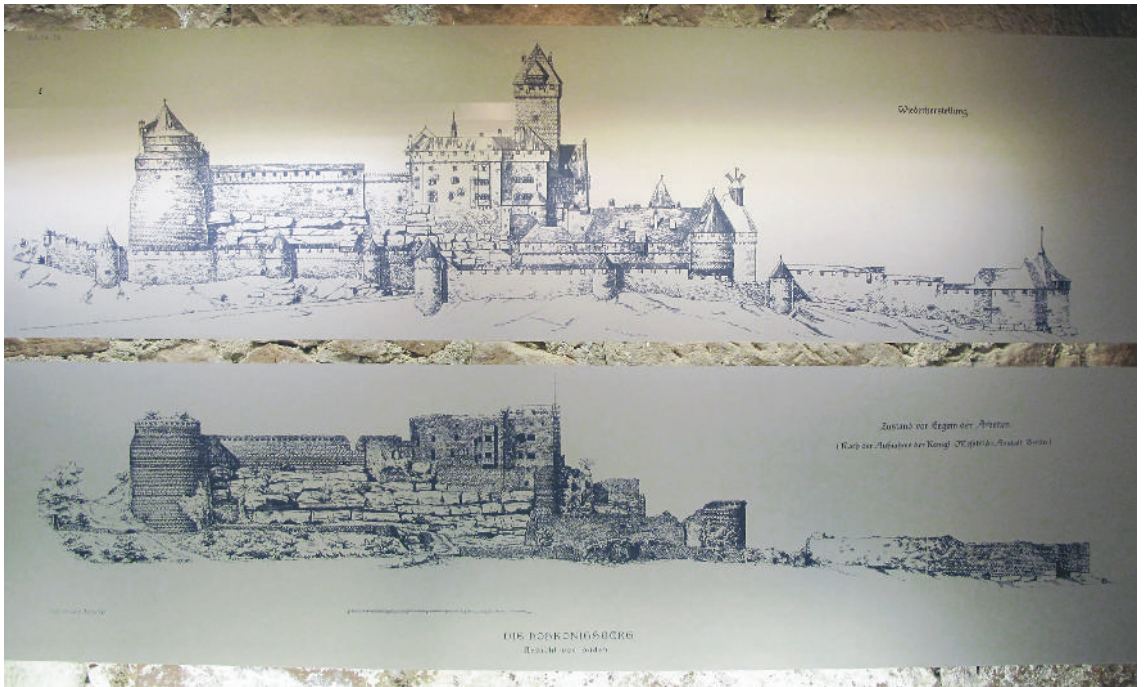
The young painter Léo Schnug and other artists of Alsatian origin were engaged for the interior decoration, which highlighted, on the one hand, the continuity of past and present – showing, for example, the imperial dynasties from the

21 H. Boockmann, *Die Marienburg im 19. Jahrhundert*. Frankfurt am Main: Propyläen, 1992.

22 J.-L. Leniaud, *Viollet-le-Duc ou les délires du système*. Paris: Mengès, 1994.



1. View of the Old Town of Cologne with the cathedral under (re)construction on the right, and the Great St Martin church on the left. Photograph by Johann Franz Michiels, part of the *Rheinpanorama* series (1856).
Reproduction from U. Grefe, *Köln in frühen Photographien 1847–1914*. Munich: Schirmer, Mosel, 1988, p. 29.



2.

The Hohkönigsburg in ruins in 1900 and after the reconstruction in 1908, architect Bodo Ehardt. Photogrammetric drawings based on the measurements of the *Königlich Preussische Messbild-Anstalt*. Exhibition view, detail of the photograph by Tangopaso, 2011. Public domain: Wikimedia Commons, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Drawings_before-after_of_the_Haut-Koenigsbourg.jpg (accessed 20 October 2014).

Hohenstaufen to the Hohenzollern – and, on the other hand, used regional motifs and included aspects of regional culture and history. Thus the castle was situated in a regional context in order to influence the public mood in Alsace-Lorraine in favour of the restoration project and to emphasise the permanence and strength of the ties between the *Reichsland* and the German Empire. In this way, the castle was intended to connect not only past and present, but also the region and the nation. The nation – and the German Empire – presented itself as rooted in regional identities.

The new ‘medieval’ castle was inaugurated in May 1908, with Wilhelm II himself in attendance at the celebrations. A medieval spectacle was performed with a pageant and costumes. Its motto was *Eine feste Burg – ein festes Reich*, which translates roughly as ‘A strong castle – a strong empire’ and alludes jointly to the Lutheran hymn *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott* (‘A safe stronghold our God is still’) as well as Prussian-Protestant hegemony. The inauguration speech given by Wilhelm II emphasised these ties and relationships:

Raised on the ruins of centuries past, the Hohkönigsburg as it now stands ... shows a true image of the past as it appeared here in the year 1500. We admire these noble examples of architecture and defensive fortification and in these surroundings we find it easy to transport ourselves back in time to a glorious age of knighthood. [...] May the Hohkönigsburg in the west of the Empire, similar to the Marienburg in the east, remain as a landmark and symbol of German culture and power for successive generations; and may it serve all the thousands and tens of thousands of those who will follow in our footsteps to make their pilgrimage here and pay homage to the past, to their pleasure and instruction.²³

As this speech indicates, Wilhelm II strongly believed that the castle would become a landmark and tourist site, and that the impact of the castle rested on its status as a tourist attraction.

As the architect of the Hohkönigsburg Bodo Ebhardt faced harsh criticism of his work. Respected art historians criticised the fact that the restoration and reconstruction had taken place, as well as its implementation. In newspapers and even in the German parliament, Ebhardt was mocked as a Teuton who would try to implement gothic forms even in the German colonies in Africa. In fact, however, Ebhardt only represented one tendency in art history and especially in architecture. He was no less modern than his opponents. He used contemporary models, some of them French, for his work. He realised the importance of public opinion. He used mass media to appeal to the public, he initiated associations engaging in the reconstruction of castles. He also promoted tourism – and tourists came and visited his castles, especially the Hohkönigsburg. It was a time when leisure was increasing in importance; the castle attracted people seeking recreation. New roads to the castle were

²³ Die Reden Kaiser Wilhelms II. Vol. 4, 1906 – Ende 1912. Eds. J. Penzler, B. Krieger. Leipzig: Reclam, 1913, pp. 109–110.

constructed, and restaurants opened near the monument. Not only tourism, but also the national economy benefited from the new historical site.

Another consequence of the castle's popularity was that Bodo Ebhardt's image of the Middle Ages became strongly identified with the very image of Germany. This image was not one of losses, of a long-ago history of glory and power now past, but an image of a triumphant nation and a glorious present, an image which ruined castles would undoubtedly have been unable to radiate.

After the defeat of Germany in World War I, Alsace-Lorraine was once again integrated into the French nation-state. The Hohkönigsburg was not destroyed, as were monuments of the German emperors in Metz. Instead, the French flag was hoisted over the castle, turning it into a French *lieu de mémoire*.²⁴ It remained a tourist attraction, now drawing French visitors. The memory of the castle survived in the families of several local or regional craftsmen and workers who had taken part in the construction work and had earned their wages there over a period of years. The Hohkönigsburg thus became a site at which family memories and a tourist attraction interacted.

We can see from this history that the castle was open to a range of interpretations; it and its message were ambiguous. More importantly, it shaped a lasting image of medieval history. About half a million visitors climb the Hohkönigsburg every year, thus demonstrating an ongoing admiration for this artefact of the construction of German history and memory.

Final remarks

As we have seen in the course of this paper, the nineteenth century was characterised by sustained debate on the preservation, restoration and reconstruction of historical sites. Art historians, such as Georg Dehio, Alois Riegl and Paul Clemen, were hostile to the work of Bodo Ebhardt and to the principles by which he conducted this work.²⁵ Paul Clemen, the famous art historian and Prussian conservator (*Provinzialkonservator*) in the Rhine province, was an opponent of the project for the completion of the Cologne cathedral. Like most art historians, he considered the completed cathedral to be an artificial monument, a mock-up of medieval history.

At the outbreak of World War I, all controversies fell silent. A number of infamous appeals made by German intellectuals to the German and international public characterised Germany as a nation of culture, defending cultural and historical monuments all over Europe, even in the occupied parts of Belgium and France; at the same time, other countries criticised the German Empire for destroying historic

24 B. Hamann, *Haut-Koenigsbourg. Lépopée d'une renaissance*. Mulhouse: L'Alsace, 1990; A. Humm, A. Staub, *Le Haut-Koenigsbourg*. Strasbourg: La Nuée Bleue, 1991; J.-C. Richez, A. Willaume, *Haut-Koenigsbourg. Le château d'illusion*. Strasbourg: Bueb & Reumaux, 1990.

25 For Dehio's and Riegl's arguments concerning reconstruction see their articles in the anthology *Konservieren oder restaurieren?* For Clemen's attitude to Bodo Ebhardt see P. Clemen, O. Döring, Bodo Ebhardt, *Ein deutscher Baumeister, 1865-1925*, Berlin 1925. - *Zeitschrift für Denkmalpflege* 1926/1927, vol. 1, pp. 78-80.

monuments, such as the cathedral of Reims and the library of Leuven (Louvain).²⁶ During this period, such art historians as Clemen began to change their attitude towards, at least, the monumental nineteenth-century projects for the reconstruction of historical sites.²⁷ Although he continued to believe that the aesthetic value of reconstruction was low, he admitted the national value of such buildings, stating that they demonstrated the potential of German architects and engineers.

Henceforth these buildings were seen as symbols of German power. German conservators tasked with guaranteeing the protection of monuments in occupied territories emphasised the benevolence (in their view) of German cultural policy abroad, stating that the governments supplanted by German occupation had failed to protect their own cultural heritage.²⁸ In the course of the ensuing years, including the defeat of 1918, Germany's pride in the protection of its national heritage and in its monuments shaded into a degree of national arrogance. Regional traditions and monuments, including those reconstructed during the nineteenth century, became integrated into Germany's national self-image, and the harsh controversies between the advocates of preservation and the advocates of restoration or reconstruction lost their bitterness. Rothenburg ob der Tauber is a symbol of the long-lasting effects of the nineteenth century's invention of tradition. And it emphasises the fact that our image of pre-modern times is inevitably a result of recent developments and thus, in fact, a very modern one.

26 W. Speitkamp, 'Ein dauerndes und ehrenvolles Denkmal deutscher Kulturtätigkeit'. *Denkmalpflege im Kaiserreich 1871–1918*. – *Die alte Stadt* 1991, vol. 18, pp. 173–197; W. Schivelbusch, *Die Bibliothek von Löwen. Eine Episode aus der Zeit der Weltkriege*. Munich: Hanser, 1988. Cf. B. Störtkuhl, *Art Historiography during World War I: Kunstschutz and Reconstruction in the General Government of Warsaw* in this volume.

27 'Der Rhein ist mein Schicksal geworden'. Paul Clemen, 1866–1947. *Erster Provinzialkonservator der Rheinprovinz*. Ed. G. Knopp. Cologne: Rheinland-Verlag, 1991.

28 *Kunstschutz im Kriege. Berichte über den Zustand der Kunstdenkmäler auf den verschiedenen Kriegsschauplätzen und über die deutschen und österreichischen Maßnahmen zu ihrer Erhaltung, Rettung, Erforschung*. 2 vols. Ed. P. Clemen. Leipzig: Seemann, 1919; P. Clemen, *Kriegsdenkmalpflege*. – P. Clemen, *Die deutsche Kunst und die Denkmalpflege. Ein Bekenntnis*. Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1933, pp. 89–108.