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GABRIELLA CIANCIOLO COSENTINO

## ON THE TRAIL OF FREDERICK II

IDEOLOGY AND PATRIOTIC SENTIMENT IN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY  
REDISCOVERY OF MEDIEVAL SOUTHERN ITALY

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## ABSTRACT

This article investigates the nineteenth-century rediscovery and reception outside Italy of the architecture of the medieval Kingdom of Sicily, with special attention to Germany and France. Its objective is to provide a new approach to understanding the phenomenon, placing greater emphasis on its transnational dimension. The rediscovery of southern Italian medieval architecture in the nineteenth century was effected not only through the research work of local scholars, but also through the perceptive and investigative gazes of non-Italian travelers, art historians, and architects, who produced enduring documentation and novel insights into Norman constructions in Sicily, Hohenstaufen castles in Apulia, and Angevin monuments in Naples. Starting from the assumption of a close relationship between medieval

reception and the idea of nationhood, the article illustrates the process that led some European countries to seek their roots beyond their own borders and ultimately discover a piece of their 'national' architecture abroad. In a complex relationship between patriotic sentiment and a quest for the 'other', nineteenth-century Nationalism – among other major Western forces and movements such as Romanticism, Orientalism and Historicism – generated a renewed interest in this fascinating border zone, a liminal tract between Europe, Africa, and the East, and its extraordinarily rich and complex architectural tradition, one which had previously been considered barbarian and relegated to the margins of European art histories.

Introduction: mélanges of history, travels  
and architecture

In 1875 the French historian, writer, and orientalist Ernest Renan,<sup>1</sup> a scholar of the Middle Ages, theorist of nationalism, and passionate explorer and connoisseur of the Mediterranean East, was invited to participate in the *XII Congresso degli Scienziati Italiani* in Palermo.<sup>2</sup> On this occasion he spent twenty days in Sicily,<sup>3</sup> where he was deeply impressed by the Norman architecture, the result of what he called an unprecedented combination of three apparently incompatible worlds: the Byzantine, Latin, and Arabic. The art of combining “the delightful manner of constructing” of the Arabian architects with the talent of Byzantine mosaic artists in the twelfth century was due to the “great, noble and accommodating spirit” of the Norman dynasty that – according to Renan – “was the true national house of Sicily”.<sup>4</sup>

In his *Mélanges d'histoire et de voyages* Renan describes the emotion he experienced upon his arrival in Palermo: “The sight of Sicily, from the height of Palermo, struck us with admiration. This is neither Syria nor Greece; it is rather Africa, something torrid and immense”.<sup>5</sup> The Cappella Palatina, that he defined as the little mosque of Omar and numbered among the most beautiful monuments in the world, especially captured his attention together with other ‘wonders’ of Sicilian-Norman art.<sup>6</sup>

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the process of re-evaluating Sicilian medieval architecture had already begun. Renan’s assessments and participation in the contemporary controversy regarding the restoration of Norman buildings in Palermo testify to the interest in the Sicilian monuments, as well as to the liveliness of the scholarly debate that surrounded them.<sup>7</sup> In contrast to earlier peri-

ods, the nineteenth century witnessed a considerable increase in the awareness of southern Italian medieval architecture that went well beyond regional and national boundaries. This article investigates the reception outside Italy of the architecture of the medieval Kingdom of Sicily between the early nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, with special attention to Germany and France. The objective is to contribute not only to the study of the reception itself, but also to the understanding of its motives in a broader perspective.

Renan’s *Mélanges* not only convey the enthusiasm and international interest in this architectural tradition, but they also reveal two central aspects of this interest: the first concerns the image of southern Italy as the doorway to the East. For many travelers the first (and sometimes the only) encounter with the ‘Orient’ occurred in regions like Sicily and Campania, where the Byzantine mosaics and ‘Moorish’ components of the architecture from the Norman period aroused the exotic imaginations of artists, scholars, architects, and patrons. Indeed, art historical and travel literature on the southern Middle Ages emphasize its oriental character, even though, as Jill Caskey speaking about Amalfi has pointed out, “rather than to identify precise geographic, cultural, religious, aesthetic or even chronological parameters”,<sup>8</sup> the term “oriental” was often used to signal a general mood, a vague evocation of architectural and decorative elements borrowed from the Byzantine and Islamic world. Orientalism, with its dual aspects of scholarly approach and exotic fantasy, is without doubt one of the motivations that compelled architects and art historians from beyond the Alps to travel south in search of new fields of research, artistic inspiration, architectural models, and ornamental patterns.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ernest Renan (1823–92) was one of the most influential French authors of the late nineteenth century. He wrote on history, religion, philosophy, society, and politics, and his *Vie de Jésus* (Paris 1863) was read the world over. In spite of the differences in work and personality, his worldwide renown has been compared to the fame attained by Voltaire in the previous century: ROBERTSON 1924, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> The *XII Congresso degli Scienziati Italiani* was the last of a series of Italian congresses that began in 1839. Here, distinguished scholars from all over Italy discussed matters related to “the past, the present, and the monuments of Palermo” and, in particular, the period that was then considered the golden age in Sicilian history and art: the Norman era. The invitation to take part in the *XII Congresso degli Scienziati Italiani* in Palermo came from Michele Amari (1806–89), a Sicilian historian, philologist, orientalist, politician, and patriot, whose friendship with Renan is testified by a series of letters now in the Biblioteca centrale della Regione siciliana (Carteggio Amari, B. III, 1–60). On the history of the Italian scientific congresses from 1839 until 1875 in the context of the political Risorgimento, see CASALENA 2007.

<sup>3</sup> RENAN 1878.

<sup>4</sup> RENAN 1878, p. 80.

<sup>5</sup> RENAN 1878, p. 78: “La vue de la Sicile, à la hauteur de Palerme, nous frappa d’admiration. Ce n’est ni la Syrie ni la Grèce; c’est plutôt l’Afrique, quelque chose de torride et de gigantesque.”

<sup>6</sup> RENAN 1878, p. 82.

<sup>7</sup> On Renan’s contribution to the debate on Norman Sicilian monuments and their preservation, see TOMASELLI 1994. On the restorations of Norman architecture in the nineteenth century, see also GUTTILLA 1990 and CIANCIOLO COSENTINO 2012c.

<sup>8</sup> CASKEY 2004, p. 61.

<sup>9</sup> With its wide-ranging social and anthropological implications, Orientalism is one of the most significant aspects of nineteenth-century German Historicism. An interesting example of the impact of Orientalism in architecture is the Wilhelma, the Moorish Villa close to Stuttgart that Ludwig Zanth built in the 1840s for King Wilhelm I von Württemberg: a triumph of decorativism and polychromy that combined Arabian elements from Sicilian and Andalusian architecture: ZANTH 1855. See also SCHULZ (E.) 1976. Without going into the extensive field of Orientalism and the role it played in German and French cul-

The second, and at first glance opposite aspect present in the *Mélanges* as well as in the reception of the southern Middle Ages deals with Renan's 'national idea' as theorized in his famous lecture delivered at the Sorbonne in 1882, entitled *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* Renan's definition of the nation as a spiritual principle and common historical memory, which is at the heart of the nineteenth-century nation-building process, was at the time very influential and is a foremost conceptual key to understanding the ideological underpinnings of the medieval reception in general, and of the rediscovery of the southern Middle Ages in particular. Indeed, nationalism in all its different forms and nuances – from the Italian Risorgimento to German imperialism – played a fundamental role in the re-evaluation of Norman, Hohenstaufen, and Angevin architecture in south Italy, bringing together history, myth, national heritage, and cultural identity.<sup>10</sup>

With few exceptions, scholarly work on the reception of medieval architecture of the south has not sought to situate it in its proper European context.<sup>11</sup> This can, however, help us to perceive the extent to which the reception of the southern Middle Ages formed nineteenth-century art historical debate, as well as the work of many foreign architects and scholars who felt increasingly attracted by this fascinating border zone, "a liminal space between Europe, Africa, and the Orient".<sup>12</sup> Thus, the objective of this study is to provide a new approach to understanding the rediscovery of southern Italian medieval architecture, placing greater emphasis on its transnational dimension. Indeed, only when we

ture, a topic on which a vast bibliography is available, I here limit myself to indicating only two recent publications: SCHNEPEL/BRANDS/SCHÖNIG 2011; MARCHAND 2009. On the 'Oriental Renaissance' in nineteenth-century Europe see DE DONNO 2010.

<sup>10</sup> KAUL 2007, pp. 753–54: "Im Mythos will sich die Nation ihrer Gemeinschaft über zelebrierte gemeinsame Geschichte, Ereignisse oder symbolische Gestalten versichern. Diese gegenseitige Versicherung macht Sinn, betrachtet man sie vor dem Hintergrund der von Renan vorgenommenen Definition der Nation als geistiges Prinzip, das gespeist wird aus dem gemeinsamen Besitz der Vergangenheit beziehungsweise der Erinnerungen. [...] Nicht die Wiedergabe der Wahrheit, sondern eine Vergegenwärtigung einer Vergangenheit, in die aktuelle Wünsche hineinprojiziert wurden, stand dabei im Vordergrund."

<sup>11</sup> The 'myths' of the Normans and of Emperor Frederick II have had a widespread and lasting critical fortune, and thus the bibliography on Swabian architecture and the Arab-Norman period, Sicily's golden age *tout court*, is extremely rich. Angevin architecture in Naples has also received much attention, as has nineteenth-century Historicism. This body of material provides a suitable basis for a study of the rediscovery and reception of southern Italian medieval architecture in the nineteenth century, which is an almost completely unexplored topic, with the exception of contributions limited to single aspects of it, of which I here present a selection: for a survey of the scholarly work on Norman architectural culture and the prevailing historiographical trends

employ a wider perspective can we view buildings, architects, patrons, and theoretical works as part of a broader cultural, social, and political process.

Although my interpretation assumes that Orientalism and nationalism are the keys to unlocking the door of this phenomenon – and this is why I chose them as the central threads of my research<sup>13</sup> – I shall focus here on the less investigated of these two aspects, namely the close relationship between medieval reception and the idea of nationhood in the nineteenth century. Behind the exceptional interest of the foreigners in this specific episode of southern Italy's medieval heritage, we find not merely a romantic fascination with the Middle Ages or a generic *Sehnsucht* towards the Orient, but also clear ideological motifs and even political agendas. It goes without saying that this approach does not rule out other important aspects that such a vast topic may imply.

### Terminological and chronological clarification

From the Normans to the Swabians, and the Anjou to the Aragonese, successive dynasties in southern Italy between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries made up a variegated and shifting political framework that contributed to the growth of an extraordinarily rich and complex architectural culture.<sup>14</sup> One may recall, for instance, Camillo Boito's definition of Sicilian medieval art as "Roman-Byzantine-Arabic-Norman-Sicilian",<sup>15</sup> or the description of the "Siculo-

from the nineteenth century to the present, see CIOTTA 1992; in his essay "Moscheen im Okzident. Architektonische Maskerade und Sehnsucht nach dem Orient im 19. Jahrhundert", Michele Cometa investigates the role of ornamentalism and Orientalism in the nineteenth-century German architectural debate, with special focus on the reception of Sicilian-Norman architecture (COMETA 2003); in 2010–11 the exhibition *Die Staufer und Italien* was the occasion for a broad overview of the history, myth, and reception of Hohenstaufen art and architecture (see in particular KAUL 2010). Other seminal contributions on the Hohenstaufen reception in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are BRINGMANN 1979, HERZNER/KRÜGER 2010 and KAPPEL 2013.

<sup>12</sup> MOE 2002, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> My recent participation in international symposia has given me the opportunity to explore several aspects of the subject in greater depth, in particular those related to nineteenth-century Orientalism and ornamentalism: CIANCIOLO COSENTINO 2012a, CIANCIOLO COSENTINO 2014.

<sup>14</sup> For an overview of the history of architecture in Sicily, see CALANDRA 1938. This book is the first – and still the only – to synthesize the history of Sicilian architecture from its origins to the first decades of the twentieth century.

<sup>15</sup> BOITO 1880, p. 68: "Volendo definirla non ci sembra che si possa trovare altra formola se non questa bruttissima e sconciamente prolissa e tuttavia insufficiente: *Arte romano-bisantino-araba-normanno-sicula*. Ond'è che noi preferiamo chiamarla: *Arte siciliana del medio evo*."

Norman style” provided by the English writer Henry Gally Knight to grasp the complexity of influences: “Saracenic in its arches; Roman in its pillars and capitals; Byzantine in its cupolas and mosaics; Greek in its enrichments; a combination to be found only in Sicily, and natural there from the mixture of the different nations”.<sup>16</sup> Thus, a preliminary remark about the expression “southern Middle Ages” and its somewhat problematic definition is necessary. What exactly is meant by this term? Does it encompass an identifiable ‘style’? The specific historical and geographical situation of Italy’s southern regions – subject to various foreign rulers and centrally positioned within the Mediterranean – gave way during the Middle Ages to a complex architectural landscape influenced both by Western and Eastern cultures. This stylistic variety and heterogeneity, together with the many medieval artistic manifestations in southern Italy, presents a challenge to art history’s traditional taxonomies, as well as to generic and ambiguous concepts like “Gothic”, “Islamic”, “Byzantine”, and “Romanesque”. This terminological ambiguity has led art historians to offer definitions that prioritize dynastic rather than stylistic periods. Even today, many scholars still refer to southern Italian medieval architecture using the terms Norman, Frederician, Angevin, and Aragonese.

A number of recent studies investigate the symbolic significance of this architecture and its role as a medium for dynastic self-representation.<sup>17</sup> Still, as Caroline Bruzelius has pointed out, medieval architecture in southern Italy is an “architecture of domination”, as well as an “architecture of adaptation”, constantly shifting between the adoption of foreign models and the survival of indigenous idioms and building traditions.<sup>18</sup> The context that produced this architecture is a complex multicultural society ruled by successive, distinct dynasties, which was open to a variety of commercial and cultural streams, but at the same time tied to local artistic syntaxes, materials, and traditions. For this reason, “the nature of medieval art in southern Italy readily accommodates a range of scholarly interests, and indeed

resists to be placed within a single homogenizing framework”.<sup>19</sup>

From time to time historiographical tendencies and traditions in the past two centuries have emphasized a specific style or influence (i. e., Byzantine, Islamic, French) or the role of patrons and institutions who commissioned these works of art (i. e., Norman, Hohenstaufen, Anjou, Benedictine, Basilian),<sup>20</sup> even though most southern Italian medieval buildings can hardly be categorized by a specific stylistic paradigm or unequivocally defined, since the different ‘sources’ are inextricably interwoven within the building itself. For example, in his analysis of the *Baukunst Kalabriens und Siziliens im Zeitalter der Normannen* (1942–44), Heinrich Mathias Schwarz highlights the Latin-northern component and the transalpine influences in Norman religious architecture, still aware of the limits of the investigations on individual aspects or stylistic components of this art.<sup>21</sup> Significantly, Schwarz’s research was welcomed by the then director of the Bibliotheca Hertziana in Rome, Leo Bruhns, as an art-historical contribution to the history of the *Germanentum* in Italy.<sup>22</sup>

In recent years, global processes have had a profound impact on the humanities, bringing increasing attention to migration, mobility, and the transcultural circulation of people as well as the exchange of ideas across fluid borders<sup>23</sup>. Recent art historical literature on the southern Middle Ages is therefore inclined to emphasize the pan-Mediterranean character of this architectural production and its syncretistic integration of different artistic traditions. With regard to the late Gothic in the south, much work has been done in the last decades: new studies stress the autonomy and vitality of the southern Italian building tradition in contrast to assessments rooted in preconceptions like the idea of the Mezzogiorno as an area both peripheral and artistically behind the times, or the outdated concept of ‘stylistic delay’ in the local culture compared to ‘centers’ like Rome and Florence.<sup>24</sup> During the Middle Ages Sicily was the centerpiece of a prosperous royal realm at the edge of

<sup>16</sup> KNIGHT 1840, p. ii.

<sup>17</sup> Scholarly interest in symbolism, messages, and political meanings in the visual culture of the medieval *Regnum* is vast. See for example: D’ONOFRIO 1994, MICHALSKY 2001, TRONZO 2007, WIECZOREK/SCHNEIDMÜLLER/WEINFURTER 2010, LIPPMANN 2012.

<sup>18</sup> BRUZELIUS 2000.

<sup>19</sup> CASKEY 2004, p. 17.

<sup>20</sup> Early twentieth-century literature on the medieval architecture of southern Italy tended to emphasize some aspects peculiar to it, losing sight of other important sources and components. This ‘monodirectional’ interpretation is particularly noticeable in the literature on Norman architecture in Sicily, which variously focused attention on Islamic elements, Byzantine influences, or the importation of northern forms.

<sup>21</sup> SCHWARZ 1942–44, p. 4: “Wenn [...] hier [...] eine Klärung der baukünstlerischen Beziehungen zur Romantik [*misprinted for Romanik*] des Nordens im Vordergrund steht, so bedeutet dies durchaus nicht eine erneute einseitige Verlagerung des gesamten Fragenbereiches, sondern lediglich die Verdeutlichung einer Stilkomponente, welche für die erste von etwa 1060 bis 1130 reichende Phase normannischer Kirchengründungen maßgeblich war.”

<sup>22</sup> KAPPEL 2013, p. 174.

<sup>23</sup> KARAGOZ/SUMMERFIELD 2015.

<sup>24</sup> Recent studies have cast aside the idea of an obtuse resistance to classicism and the Renaissance in southern Italian late Gothic, together with many other historiographical clichés. See mainly NOBILE 2002, NOBILE 2005.



the Mediterranean Sea, a space of multiculturalism and historical layering.<sup>25</sup> Today, categories such as ‘Medieval Mediterranean’ and ‘Mediterranean Gothic’<sup>26</sup> reflect the more wide-ranging trends of scholarly research and the effort to re-define the borders – both chronologically and geographically – of southern medieval art, going beyond the traditional, rigid interpretive schemes or mere formal and stylistic aspects, and investigating more complex economic, social, and cultural interactions.

The exceptionally high standard and wide range of artistic and architectural creativity in medieval southern Italy was the object of extensive research in the past two centuries. Regardless of the different historiographical directions and constructions, the enthusiasm and international interest in this architectural tradition has continued uninterrupted, as is demonstrated by the continual flow of scholarly research during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, right up to the present day.

#### Local and foreign scholarship

Across Europe the nineteenth-century emergence of nationalism,<sup>27</sup> as well as the Romantic criticism of Enlightenment ideology, paved the way for the re-evaluation of what Séroux d’Agincourt called the history of art’s “missing link”. By this he meant the Middle Ages, which had long been forgotten, generally considered as a dark period of decadence and decline. Now many European nations – from France to Germany, from Finland to Hungary – began to seek their origins and cultural identity. The rediscovery of a proper ‘national’ architecture, then often identified with the Gothic or other artistic expressions of the Middle Ages, played a key role in this process. The artistic significance of this so-called period of decadence has been variously interpreted, yet a single constant runs through this reassessment: the quest for identity, be it regional or national.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, Norman architecture became a symbol of Sicilian cultural identity.

Likewise, the Romanesque churches and castles built under Frederick II came to be celebrated as the most authentic expression of art in Apulia. Naples, a city with a cosmopolitan identity, had gone its own way and as a result, Angevin architecture and the Catalan Quattrocento were gradually discovered. Regardless of regional differences, the beginning of the exploration of medieval art in all of its expressions in the southern Italian regions opened up new fields of research for scholars and architects, with a seemingly inexhaustible repertory of sources and models.

Due to the prejudices, stereotypes, and actual dangers that for centuries nourished the *topos* of the south as an inaccessible district, regions like Apulia, Calabria and Sicily were long excluded from the traditional routes of the Grand Tour and relegated to the margins of European art histories. Until the end of the eighteenth century, temples and classical antiquities were the only motives for a trip to the south, and for many travelers in search of the Hellenic, among them Goethe, Sicily was perceived as a Greek experience *tout court*.<sup>28</sup> Medieval architecture, by contrast, was the object of criticism and disillusionment, if considered at all.<sup>29</sup> But in the first decades of the nineteenth century, those regions progressively acquired greater awareness of their own medieval cultural *koine*, owed to the argumentations of illustrious scholars like Séroux d’Agincourt and Cicognara,<sup>30</sup> as well as to seminal contributions by local scholars, including the Duke of Serradifalco, Michele Amari, Gioacchino Di Marzo, Benedetto Gravina, and Demetrio Salazaro. Following on the wave of new liberal ideals, the process of constructing local identities began. This development was not, however, without localist, tendentious interpretations, which ran parallel to the formation of a strong political opposition to the authoritarian and obscurantist regime of the Bourbon monarchy in southern Italy: “Even before 1860, the exigencies of the Risorgimento were materializing in the political and cultural appreciation of the Norman realm. For the Sicilians it signified liberation from a monarchy, that of the despotic

<sup>25</sup> DELOGU 2010.

<sup>26</sup> For issues related to the historiographical concept of the Mediterranean Gothic and to medieval architecture in the Mediterranean area in general, as well as the intense cultural exchange between Sicily and Spain in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see NOBILE 2006, GAROFALO/NOBILE 2007, ZARAGOZÁ I CATALÁN 2007.

<sup>27</sup> Although the birth of nationalism and the origins of the modern nation-state date back to the eighteenth century, the rise of nationalism and the emergence of the national perspectives profoundly affected nineteenth-century Europe.

<sup>28</sup> KRUF 1970.

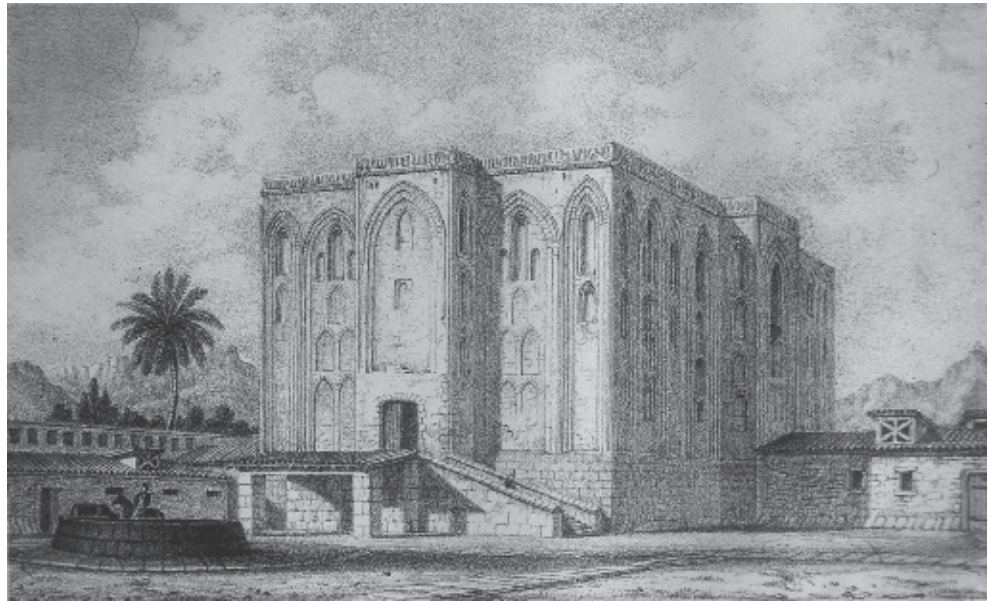
<sup>29</sup> RIEDESEL 1771, OSTERKAMP 1992.

<sup>30</sup> Séroux d’Agincourt and Cicognara are the authors of two of the first extensive art historical overviews to offer a new historiographical model for artistic and archeological research. Séroux d’Agincourt’s *Histoire de l’art par les monuments* (SÉROUX D’AGINCOURT 1823) and Cicognara’s *Storia della scultura* from 1813–18 (CICOGNARA 1824/2007) are the first to expose the rich Early Christian and medieval artistic production, and to include southern Italian monuments and artifacts from the Middle Ages in their comprehensive histories of art. For an interpretation of their meaning against the backdrop of the European political context between the French Revolution and the Congress of Vienna, see BICKENDORF 2007. See also MONDINI 2005 and MIARELLI MARIANI 2005.



1. J. I. Hittorff, L. Zanth, *Architecture moderne de la Sicile* (from HITTORFF/ZANTH 1835, frontispiece)





2. Palermo, Cuba (from KNIGHT 1841, plate 20)

and oppressive Bourbons, through fervour for the only moment in Sicilian history when, under a Norman King, the island had been made a true nation”.<sup>31</sup> The studies by the Duke of Serradifalco on Norman churches in Sicily, those of Michele Amari on the Zisa and Cuba palaces in Palermo, and the ones by Demetrio Salazaro on the Romanesque in Apulia are indications of the growing interest in the indigenous architectural heritage of the Middle Ages.<sup>32</sup> This interest developed in close connection with the struggles for emancipation that culminated in the revolution of 1848 and, later, in Italian unification; in other words they were part of the anti-Bourbon propaganda campaign in the decades before unification, and it is no coincidence that Serradifalco, Amari, and Salazaro were fervent supporters of the cause for independence, as well as active revolutionaries in the Italian Risorgimento.<sup>33</sup>

Parallel to the scholarship of the cultivated, liberal Italian elite, there were also a vast number of studies on southern Italian medieval architecture produced outside the country. These were penned principally by French and German authors, such as Jakob Ignaz Hittorff, Ludwig Zanth, Prosper Morey, Friedrich Maximilian Hessemer, Alphonse Huillard-Bréholles, Heinrich Wilhelm Schulz, Anton Springer, Charles Enlart, Adolf Goldschmidt, Theodor Kutschmann, Paul Schubring, Emile Bertaux, Heinrich von Geymüller, Walter Leopold, Arthur Haseloff, and many others.<sup>34</sup>

In point of fact, the rediscovery of southern Italian medieval art and architecture was effected not only through the research work of local scholars, but also through the perceptive and investigative gazes of foreign travelers, art historians, and architects who produced enduring documentation and novel insights on Norman monuments in Sicily,

<sup>31</sup> OTERI 2010, p. 131: “Le istanze risorgimentali, ancor prima del 1860, si andavano concretizzando nella rivalutazione politico-culturale del regno normanno. Per i siciliani si trattava di un riscatto da una monarchia, quella borbonica, dispotica e tirannica attraverso l’esaltazione dell’unico momento della storia siciliana in cui un re normanno aveva fatto dell’isola una vera Nazione.”

<sup>32</sup> SERRADIFALCO 1838, SALAZARO 1877, AMARI 1879.

<sup>33</sup> The Duke of Serradifalco (1783–1863), Sicilian nobleman, scholar, architect, and archeologist, was one of the promoters of the Sicilian constitution of 1812 and, afterwards, of the 1848 revolution against Bourbon rule. After the return of the Bourbons he was forced into exile in Florence, where he died in 1863. Michele Amari (see note 2) and Demetrio Salazaro, both patriots, shared the same destiny of political exile. Amari spent a long time in Paris and afterwards in Florence, where he died in 1889. After 1848 Salazaro took refuge in Paris, Luxembourg, London, Belgium and Ireland, before settling in Naples. On Serradifalco see Sessa 1995, Cianciolo Cosentino 2004. On Demetrio Salazaro see Ventura 2003.

<sup>34</sup> The extensive number of contributions by non-Italian scholars published alongside local studies may be observed in the following chronological selection of key studies on medieval architecture in southern Italy appearing during a 100-year period (between 1823 and 1923, i.e. the years in which Séroux d’Agincourt and von Schlosser’s works were published): SÉROUX D’AGINCOURT 1810–23, HITTORFF/ZANTH 1835, SERRADIFALCO 1838, KNIGHT 1838, GIRAULT DE PRANGEY 1841, MOREY 1841, HESSEMER 1842, HUILLARD-BRÉHOLLES 1844, SCHULZ (H.W.) 1860, BECKER/FÖRSTER 1866, SPRINGER 1869, SCHNAASE 1876, SALAZARO 1877, FABRICZY 1879, BERNICH 1894a, BERNICH 1894b, ENLART 1894, GOLDSCHMIDT 1898, KUTSCHMANN 1900, SCHUBRING 1901, BERNICH 1901, AVENA 1902, BERNICH 1904, BERTAUX 1904, GEYMÜLLER 1908, LEOPOLD 1917, HASELOFF 1920, SCHLOSSER 1923.

Swabian castles in Apulia, and Angevin architecture in Naples. There can be no doubt that over the course of the nineteenth century non-Italian scholars contributed greatly to the re-evaluation of the southern Middle Ages, with impressive work ranging from historical research to architectural design. German, English, and French authors left their mark on the historiography of medieval art in southern Italy and were responsible for the key studies in this field; one may only cite Hittorff and Zanth's pioneering *Architecture moderne de la Sicile* (Paris 1835, fig. 1), Henry Gally Knight's *The Normans in Sicily* (London 1838), Huillard-Bréholles's *Recherches sur les monuments et l'histoire des normands et de la maison de Souabe dans l'Italie méridionale* (Paris 1844) or Schulz's monumental *Denkmäler der Kunst des Mittelalters in Unteritalien* (Dresden 1860).

The southern Middle Ages inspired a rich and multifaceted scholarly enterprise that profoundly affected nineteenth-century European aesthetic discourse. Still, whereas the contribution of the indigenous antiquarian culture in the rediscovery of its own medieval past has been the object of extensive research, little attention has so far been devoted to the reception of this architecture on the other side of the Alps, and to the reasons why so many foreigners became passionately engaged in the debate on southern Italian medieval art and its revival.<sup>35</sup> I propose that a recognition of the contribution of non-Italian scholars – not so much their individual contributions as their role in a broad cultural process – is essential to inserting this phenomenon into its European context. I submit that many apparently different, geographically and conceptually distant manifestations of interest in the southern Middle Ages have a common thread: a persistent undercurrent of ideological contents that runs through the whole history of the reception of the Middle Ages in the nineteenth century.

### Early studies and the origins of the 'pointed style'

A first wave of international scholarly interest in Sicilian Norman architecture was due to the belief, shared by many distinguished scholars of the early nineteenth century, that the 'Saracenic' buildings in Palermo were the cradle of the European Gothic. A historiographical tradition dating back to the Renaissance tended to date the Zisa and Cuba palaces in Palermo to the Arab period (fig. 2), as the inscriptions in Cufic characters in the crowning of the two buildings seemed to confirm.<sup>36</sup> The pointed arches that characterized these buildings would therefore be the link between the architecture of Islamic countries, where this architectural element was thought to have appeared first, and the European 'pointed style'.<sup>37</sup>

The principle of stylistic affiliation between these two building traditions, one (European Gothic) considered a development from the other (eastern 'ogival' architecture), had at that time a solid theoretical foundation: the speculations of Séroux d'Agincourt (fig. 3), Hittorff, Knight, and the Duke of Serradifalco about a south-eastern origin of the pointed arch (and hence of the Gothic style) were based on the belief that the Arabs brought the 'ogival' element from the east to Sicily and then, through the Normans, imported it to France and the rest of Europe.<sup>38</sup> "Hittorff's keen interest on Sicily [...] came from his belief that the island formed the crucible where oriental and western influences mixed towards the generation of a new synthesis".<sup>39</sup> In a lecture given at the Institut Historique in Paris, Hittorff presented his theory of the Sicilian origin of Gothic architecture, showing that the system of the ogival or pointed arch, introduced by the Arabs, in Sicily was not the product of a formal and structural decline, but a necessary evolution from antiquity to modernity.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Previous scholarly interest focused mainly on the process of bringing regions (or nations) to a rediscovery of their own historical heritage. For this reason, rather than looking at the local dimension, already amply investigated by others, I have examined the role of foreign studies on the southern Middle Ages.

<sup>36</sup> The question of whether Zisa and Cuba were Norman palaces built in Arabian style or Islamic buildings inhabited by Norman kings was controversial, and around the middle of the century, still open to discussion. In 1849 the historian and arabist Michele Amari provided the final solution to the enigma: at the suggestion of architect Francesco Saverio Cavallari, Amari translated the Arabic inscription crowning the Cuba which made it possible to chronologically place the building in the Norman period (AMARI 1850). On this issue see also CIANCIOLO COSENTINO 2012b, pp. 29–31.

<sup>37</sup> The nineteenth-century debate on the origin of the pointed arch was

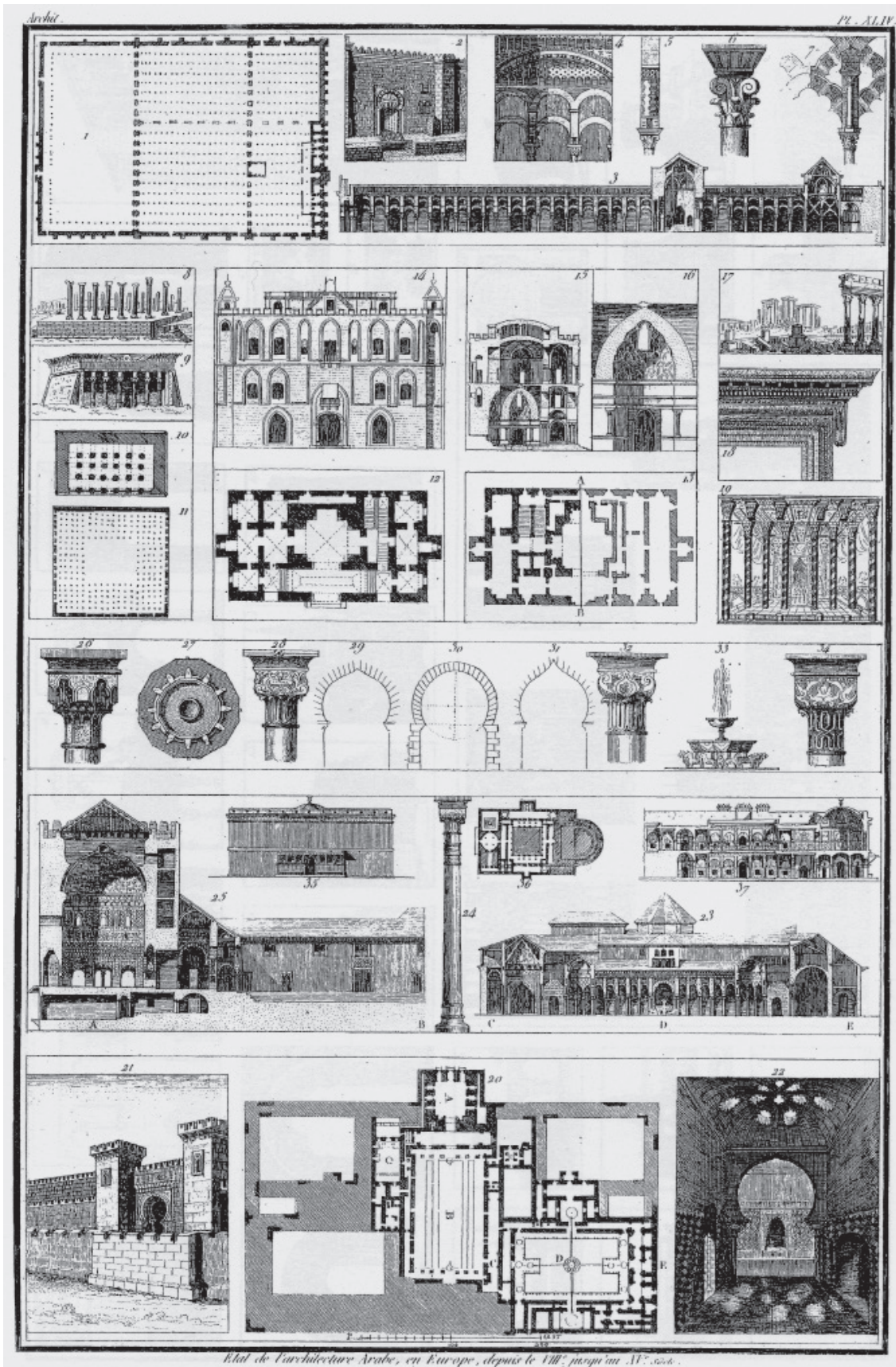
based on the assumption of a correlation between the main Gothic signifier, that is the pointed or ogival arch, and Gothic architecture, also called ogival architecture. Once this correlation was accepted, it was possible to postulate the theory – which today sounds quite unlikely, but at that time was very popular – of an eastern origin for the Gothic style. Thus, not only Germany and France, but even Sicily (which boasted early examples of pointed arches in the buildings of the Norman era) were able to claim authorship of the Gothic. On the English and German theories related to the eastern origins of the Gothic see BERTULEIT 1989.

<sup>38</sup> On nineteenth-century theories concerning the role of Sicily in the spreading of the pointed arch in Europe see MONDINI 2005, CIOTTA 1992, TOMASELLI 1994.

<sup>39</sup> BRESSANI 2010, p. 120.

<sup>40</sup> COMETA 2003, p. 41.





3. Arabic architecture in Europe (from SÉROUX D'AGINCOURT 1823, plate XLIV)





4. Palermo, Arabic architecture, various details (from GIRAULT DE PRANGEY 1841, plate 12)

The issue of the Mediterranean origin of the Gothic – in opposition to the thesis of its German or French origin – and the spread of this style in northern Europe through the Normans after the conquest of Sicily is a theoretical key of the

<sup>41</sup> HESSEMER 1992, p. 183: “Das Gespräch war so lebhaft, als ob um Leib und Leben ginge und arco acuto jedes dritte Wort [...] Das erste Gefecht: der Spitzbogen sei nicht in Deutschland erfunden, ich hatte es gar nicht behauptet, [...] diese Erfindung wollten wir gar nicht ansprechen [...] in Deutschland aber sei diese Baukunst zu ihrer höchsten Blüte gediehen und dafür hätten wir unzählige Belege für uns.”



5. Anton Hallmann, Rufolo Palace in Ravello, inside view of the tower, watercolor, 1835. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, BSB Ana 355 (Foto Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich)

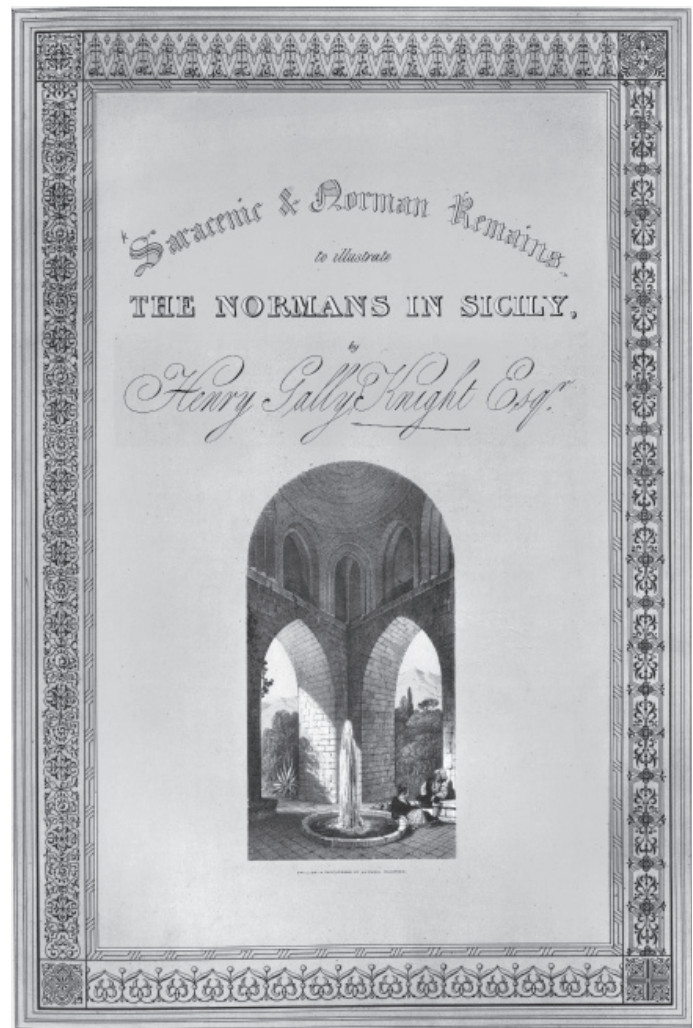
nineteenth-century architectural debate, and one which is not free of nationalistic implications. The animated exchange about the origin of the pointed arch that took place in Palermo between the German architect Friedrich Maximilian Hessemer and the Duke of Serradifalco and other partisans of the Gothic style is significant in this regard. In a letter to his father from 1829 Hessemer writes: “The conversation was as lively as if it were about risking life and limb, and *arco acuto* was every third word mentioned. [...] The first controversy: the pointed arch was not invented in Germany; I had not at all claimed this to be true, [...] we did not even want to address this invention [...] this architecture had reached its prime in Germany, however, and to that extent we had many pieces of evidence on our side”.<sup>41</sup>

Apart from the *vexata quaestio* of the origins and paternity of the Gothic and the dating and classification problems of the Norman buildings in Sicily,<sup>42</sup> beginning with

<sup>42</sup> For an overview of the Gothic revival in Europe and its theoretical framework and background, with special attention given to the problem of ‘style’ that was at the heart of the discussion during the whole nineteenth century, see GERMANN 1972. See the chapter concerning the theories on the origins of the Gothic style from Vasari to Franz Kugler in particular (pp. 37–52).

Girault de Prangey's *Essai sur l'architecture des arabes et des mores, en Espagne, en Sicile, et en Barbarie*, published in Paris in 1841 (fig. 4), a significant and lasting segment of the art historical literature on the south deals with the Islamic components and influences of so-called 'Arabic-Norman' architecture and emphasizes its geographical and ideal proximity to Africa and the East. The passion for the Orient, in its diverse forms, manifestations, and meanings, had a profound impact on nineteenth-century European culture and was not limited to matters of fashion and taste or simply to the search for new ornamental patterns. Foreigners were deeply attracted to the exoticism of cities like Palermo, Salerno, Amalfi and Ravello (fig. 5), and at a certain point Orientalism became a driving force for art historical research on the south. After de Prangey, local and foreign scholars turned their attention to the oriental influences and features of this architecture, both Islamic and Byzantine, and from the 1830s on southern Italy, and especially Sicily, occupies a prominent place in the art historical literature on the Middle Ages, as the greatly expanding historiographical production demonstrates. It should not be forgotten that the conquest of Algeria by French forces took place between 1830 and 1847. The year 1830 thus holds an important place in modern history: it represents the beginning of European interest in and the colonization of North Africa and the Middle East.

Among the early studies of 'Sicilian-Norman' architecture, in addition to the previously-mentioned publications of the Duke of Serradifalco and the pioneering volume of Jakob Ignaz Hittorff and Ludwig Zanth, we find the works of the British traveler and architectural writer Henry Gally Knight: *The Normans in Sicily* (London 1838) and the in-folio volume *Saracenic and Norman Remains to Illustrate the Normans in Sicily* (London 1840) (fig. 6). Knight's curiosity about foreign countries as well as his enthusiasm for the East, which led him to Spain, Sicily, Greece, Egypt, and Palestine, does not exclude an interest in his homeland and its cultural heritage: in the essay *An Architectural Tour in Normandy* (London 1836), Knight investigates Norman architecture in France and Britain and their mutual relationship, concluding that Anglo-Norman architecture was certainly indebted to France, but "the supposed existence of the pointed style in Normandy, in 1056, is pure imagination".<sup>43</sup> Through the examples offered in the pages of *Saracenic and Norman Remains*, Knight attempts to demonstrate that the 'pointed style' was used in Sicily at least two centuries before it was adapted on the European continent: "the Sicilian



6. H. G. Knight, *Saracenic and Norman remains to illustrate the Normans in Sicily* (from KNIGHT 1840, frontispiece)

buildings clearly show that the Saracens were the inventors. [...] How the pointed style found its way, at a later period, into France and Germany [...], is a problem that still remains to be solved".<sup>44</sup> Once again, issues of priority, precedence, and the paternity of the Gothic were at the heart of the matter. Significantly, the German edition of Knight's publication was prefaced by an introduction written by the Prussian archeologist Richard Lepsius concerning the extensive implementation of the pointed arch in Germany during the tenth and eleventh centuries, in which the efforts of the author are aimed at proving that "it does not seem random when we rediscover simultaneously, alongside the application of the pointed arch of the old style in Germany, the same phenomenon

<sup>43</sup> KNIGHT 1836, p. 258.

<sup>44</sup> KNIGHT 1836, p. ii.





7. Andria, Castel del Monte (from HUILLARD-BREHOLLES 1844, plate 22)

in Sicily and other sites of the Saracens, as the sudden concurrent emergence of seemingly completely coincidental peculiarities in often faraway countries [...] might have stood in a historical relationship”.<sup>45</sup> The search for historical and stylistic links with the medieval south is a *Leitmotiv* in German and French historiography, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>46</sup>

A central place among the early studies of Italian medieval architecture is occupied by the seminal publication of the historian Jean-Louis-Alphonse Huillard-Bréholles *Recherches sur les monuments et l'histoire des normands et de la maison de Souabe dans l'Italie méridionale*, published in Paris in 1844 under the aegis of the scholar and collector Honoré Théodore Paul Joseph d'Albert, Duke of Luynes. This book

offers a historical survey of the Norman and Swabian period in southern Italy from the beginning of the Norman era until the Sicilian Vespri: “this period so celebrated and so dramatic, which begins with the Normans in France and ends with the French of Provence and of Anjou”.<sup>47</sup> In the middle of the narrative, Huillard-Breholles deploys “a famous and eternally popular name: *gli Svevi*; that name cannot fail to interest those who enjoy studying monuments of art and the great events of history”.<sup>48</sup>

With their work, Huillard-Bréholles and the Duke of Luynes made a significant contribution to the historiography of southern Italian medieval art and, in particular, to Swabian architecture. Here, in a series of beautiful plates the Castel del Monte (fig. 7), destined to become one of the

<sup>45</sup> LEPSIUS 1841, p. 46: “[Es scheint] mir nicht zufällig [...], wenn wir neben der Anwendung des Spitzbogens alten Stils in Deutschland, gleichzeitig dieselbe Erscheinung in Sizilien und in den andern Sitzen der Sarazenen wieder finden. [...] das plötzliche gleichzeitige Hervortreten von scheinbar ganz zufällige Eigenthümlichkeiten in oft weit entfernten Ländern [spricht] sehr entschieden dafür. Und so können wir uns auch von der Ansicht nicht leicht trennen, daß die vorzeitige Erscheinung des Spitzbogens in den deutschen Kirchen des elften Jahrhunderts in einem historischen Zusammenhange gestanden haben mag.”

<sup>46</sup> PACE 1975, p. 406: “Architettura e miniatura [...] sono da considerare testimonianze dei profondi nessi europei – non solo mediterranei –

intrinseci all'arte siciliana di età normanna.” Even though the political and artistic relationship between Sicily and England during the Middle Ages was broad and profound, particularly regarding the architecture of the Norman period, in this article I will not address British theoretical contributions, another topic unto itself.

<sup>47</sup> HUILLARD-BREHOLLES 1844, p. 164: “Cette période si célèbre et si dramatique, qui commence aux Normands en France pour s'arrêter aux Français de la Provence et de l'Anjou.”

<sup>48</sup> HUILLARD-BREHOLLES 1844, p. 164: “Un nom fameux et toujours populaire: gli Svevi; ce nom ne peut laisser indifférents ceux qui se plaisent à étudier les monuments de l'art et les grands événements de l'histoire.”



most famous and celebrated buildings in the history of the Middle Ages as well as a national myth both north and south of the Alps, makes one of its first appearances together with other castles and residences of Frederick II, such as those of Foggia and Lucera, and many Apulian churches such as the cathedrals of Bari, Trani, and Bitonto. An interesting remark about Bréholles's *Recherches* is found in the travel account *Wanderjahre in Italien* by the Prussian historian Ferdinand Gregorovius, a central figure of Italian studies, best known for his travels throughout Italy in the 1850s about which he wrote extensively.<sup>49</sup> Gregorovius admires the *Recherches*, but at the same time deplores the fact that the Germans had not yet published a full collection of drawings of the historical monuments in Italy from the Hohenstaufen era, as had been his personal intention. From his perspective, the Duke of Luynes "shamed the Germans with his famous work, created at his own initiative and personal expense", because, as he writes, the Germans should also produce at least one work of this kind since Italian architecture from the Hohenstaufen era was an important part of German cultural heritage.<sup>50</sup>

In the second part of this essay I will draw special attention to the emotional and ideological aspects of the reception of the southern Middle Ages. With hindsight this example seems to be particularly poignant and revealing of a latent rivalry between Germany and France in claiming a relationship with "those magnificent monuments from the glorious days of the Hohenstaufen".<sup>51</sup>

In 1893 the Italian architect and conservator Ettore Bernich received the commission to restore the Bitonto Cathedral in Apulia from the Italian Minister of Public Education. When he commenced his studies on the medieval church, he realized that, "apart from Schulz and a couple of other foreign authors", he was unable to learn much, because Apulian medieval architecture was "so little known to the Italians".<sup>52</sup> Though published posthumously in 1860 and unfortunately never completed, Heinrich Wilhelm Schulz's fundamental contribution to the study of medieval architec-



8. Front view of the cathedral of Bitonto (from SCHULZ 1860, plate 13)

ture of southern Italy, *Denkmäler der Kunst des Mittelalters in Unteritalien*, belongs ideally to the pioneering works of the first half of the century. Schulz undertook his first study trips to Italy in the 1830s accompanied by a team of draftsmen and engravers, among them the German painter Anton Hallmann and the Sicilian architect and draftsman Francesco Saverio Cavallari, who carried out the illustrated plates of the atlas. Schulz travelled the length and breadth of southern Italy searching for medieval treasures from the Abruzzo to Sicily, visiting regions and monuments that were almost completely unknown at the time. Impressive for its size and for the richness of its illustrations, his *opus magnum* became the first comprehensive catalogue of southern Italy's Romanesque and Gothic buildings (figs. 8–9).<sup>53</sup> It was an extraordinarily modern work for its time and pro-

<sup>49</sup> *Wanderjahre in Italien*, published 1856 to 1877, is a five-volume account of Gregorovius' experiences in Italy.

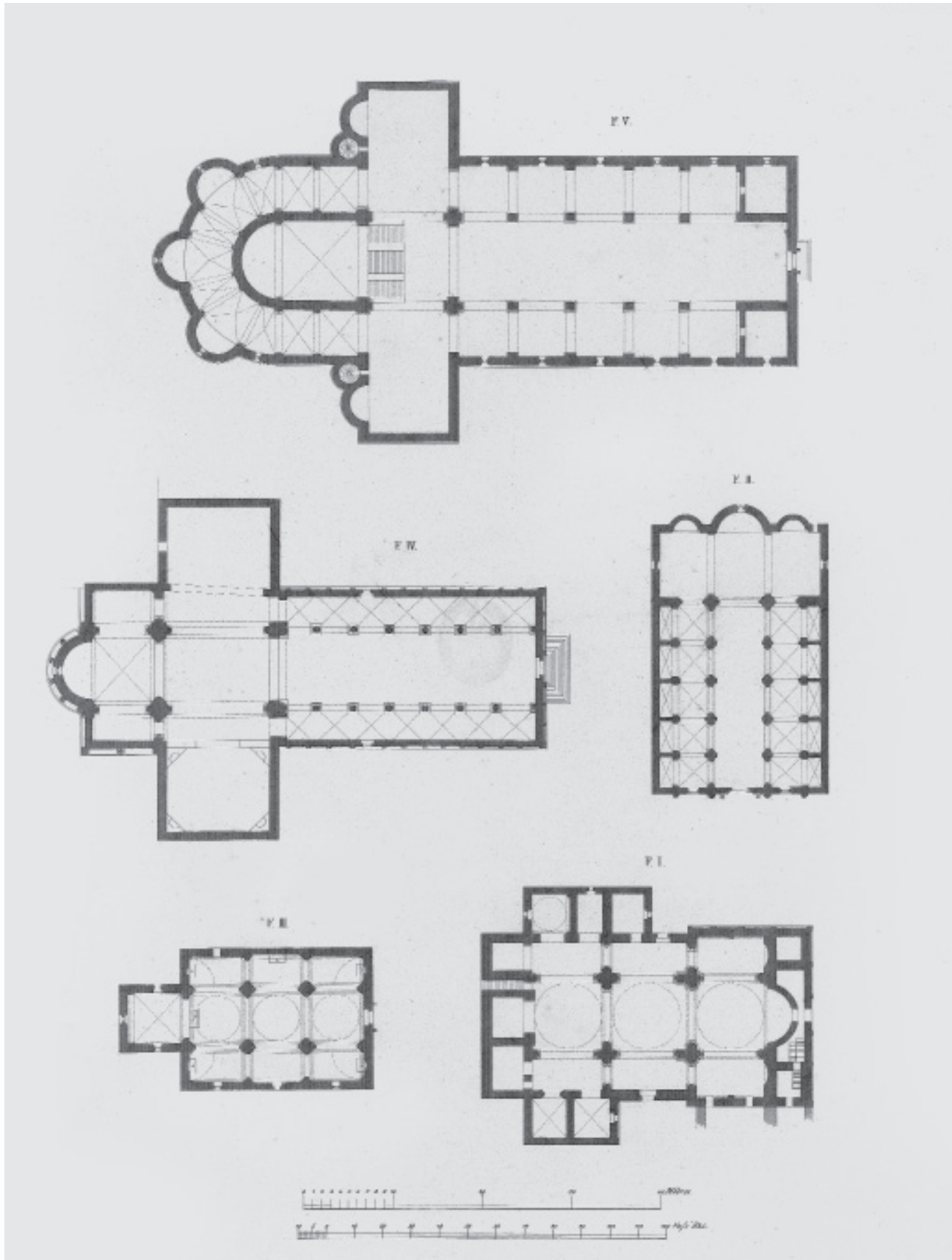
<sup>50</sup> GREGOROVIVS 1880, pp.V–VI: "Ich wollte nämlich ein Album historischer Landschaften und Monumente in Italien herausgeben, bezüglich auf die Geschichte der Hohenstaufen. [...] Diesen Plan hindert noch die Kostspieligkeit des Unternehmens [...]. Ich glaube, daß dies zu bedauern ist. Wenigstens sollten wir Deutsche ein Werk dieser Art besitzen. Wer sähe nicht gern so herrliche Monumente jener großen Hohenstaufenzeit, als Italien noch besitzt [...]. Beschämte uns doch zum Teil ein Franzose, der Herzog von Luynes, aus dessen Veranlassung und mit dessen Mitteln im Jahre 1849 zu Paris das bekannte Werk erschien."

<sup>51</sup> GREGOROVIVS 1880, p. VI.

<sup>52</sup> BERNICH 1894b, p. 141: "Nel settembre del 1893 ebbi l'incarico dal

ministro dell'Istruzione di allora [...] di studiare il progetto per il restauro della cattedrale di Bitonto. [...] E così, prima di lasciare Roma, mi preparai un poco per non andare del tutto digiuno su quel che si era scritto sulla cattedrale bitontina, meno che lo Schulz e qualche altro autore straniero, ben poco apprendevo [...] dando retta a quel che prima di partire mi raccomandò [...] l'amico mio conte Sacconi di scordarmi di Roma per mettere tutta la mia buona volontà a studiare solo l'architettura medievale pugliese, così poco conosciuta dagli italiani. Così feci."

<sup>53</sup> SCHULZ (H.W.) 1860 includes a weighty atlas with archeological reconstructions of monuments and a remarkable documentary appendix which attempts to connect written sources to buildings. The principal reconsideration of Schulz's work to date is that of Vinni Lucherini in a recent essay (LUCHERINI 2007).



9. Plans of medieval churches at Molfetta, Ruvo, Trani, Troja, and Acerenza (from SCHULZ 1860, plate 31)

vided the starting point for all subsequent studies, as Émile Bertaux acknowledges in the preface to his *L'art dans l'Italie Méridionale*.<sup>54</sup>

### The architect's question

Art historians were not alone in seeking the forgotten Middle Ages. Architects, too, discovered the potential embedded in the revival of artistic expressions tied to a specific historical period and a precise geographical ambit. In this case we are dealing with an 'operative' and elite form of rediscovery, one which though quantitatively less significant, still remains a highly interesting and qualitatively exceptional phenomenon, in opposition to the trite Eclecticism prevailing in late nineteenth-century European architectural culture.<sup>55</sup>

European Historicism is characterized by the quest for a new style, encapsulated by Heinrich Hübsch's question formulated in the title of his famous book from 1828, *In welchem Style sollen wir bauen?* (In which style shall we build?).<sup>56</sup> The search for a style of architecture deemed appropriate for the present time, "one of the most curious and far-reaching phenomena of the mid-nineteenth century",<sup>57</sup> dominated the European architectural debate for some decades. For many architects the answer to this foremost concern lay in the recovery of a local identity, which can be observed – in the case of Italy – in the myriad revivals ranging from the Normans in Sicily to the Sforza in Lombardy. Among these revivals the medieval option and the local vernacular were mostly favored. After the political unification of Italy in 1861, the Renaissance idiom was identified as that capable of uniting the new nation *sub specie architectonica*.

Historical styles lent legitimacy to the identity of young nations in search of their own glorious past. The relationship between architecture and language, style and nationality, regional and national identity is one of the central themes in the history and theory of Western architecture.<sup>58</sup> Here it should be emphasized that region and nation (or regionalism and nationalism) were not conceived as contradictory. On the contrary, they represented the same patriotic sentiment from two different angles.<sup>59</sup>

Accordingly, Norman and Swabian architecture, rediscovered in its indigenous and vernacular variants, became the expression of southern Italian cultural identity. This architecture, however, also captured the French *génie national* and the German *Volkstum* through the appropriation of artistic traditions and stylistic features that were geographically distant, yet ideally linked to the country's historical memory. The Norman and Angevin dynasties, as well as the Hohenstaufen emperors, were the intersection and the historical justification for this appropriation aimed at reconstructing (or inventing) an ideal past, to the extent that the art historian Arthur Haseloff asserted in 1906: "The true heroes of Apulia are certainly not those Trojan champions, Diomedes and others, [...] but rather the Nordic conquerors, the descendants and successors of that small Norman flock, who established their hegemony here towards the mid-eleventh century. Thanks to them, Apulia's medieval heyday began, and this prosperity unfolded to unimagined splendor with the transfer of the Sicilian royal throne to the house of the Hohenstaufen emperors".<sup>60</sup>

In Germany and France, nineteenth-century graphic art production in reference to southern Italian medieval art and architecture is impressive, ranging from travel sketches to drawings and watercolors, architectural surveys, landscape

<sup>54</sup> BERTAUX 1904, p. IV: "Cet étranger, un Saxon appelé Heinrich-Wilhelm Schulz, est le premier qui ait essayé d'étudier méthodiquement et de reproduire en détail les monuments antérieurs au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle qui étaient conservés dans les différentes provinces de l'Italie méridionale."

<sup>55</sup> I use the terms 'Historicism' and 'Eclecticism' in their general architectural and art historical terminological significance only – and in particular I refer to HAMMERSCHMIDT 1985 – and not with reference to their more complex historical and philosophical concepts and methods.

<sup>56</sup> HÜBSCH 1828.

<sup>57</sup> COLLINS 1965, p. 128.

<sup>58</sup> On the connections between style and nationality, vernacular and "official" languages in Western medieval and modern architecture see CLARKE 2000.

<sup>59</sup> CORTJAENS/DE MAEYER/VERSCHAFFEL 2008, p. 9: "Due to the largely

reconciliatory assumption of the region into its respective state there hardly existed an irreconcilable dichotomy between nation and region – at least not in the 'great' states such as Germany and France. On the contrary, regarding official fine art, architecture and monuments, historicism even constituted an essential common denominator between local and national authority." See *ibid.* on the mutual interaction between nation and region.

<sup>60</sup> HASELOFF 1906/1991, p. 12: "Die wahren Heroen Apuliens sind mitnichten jene trojanischen Helden, Diomedes und andere, von deren Städtegründungen die Lokalhistoriker so viel gefabelt haben [...], sondern die nordischen Eroberer, die Nachkommen und Nachfolger jener kleinen Normannenschar, die gegen Mitte des elften Jahrhunderts hier ihre Herrschaft aufrichtete. Ihnen dankt Apulien den Beginn der mittelalterlichen Blütezeit, und diese Blüten entfalten sich zu ungeahnter Pracht mit dem Übergang des sizilianischen Königsthrones an das Geschlecht der hohenstaufischen Kaiser".

paintings, measured survey drawings, studies of decoration, and full-scale structural details.<sup>61</sup> This wealth of material provides new insights into the ‘afterlife’ of the southern Middle Ages and its importance as a major source of inspiration for German and French architects and decorators, and provides possible responses to the question of the role southern Norman, Swabian, and Angevin architecture played in the artistic self-representation of the great powers of Europe. For instance, was Ludwig I of Bavaria’s impulse to design the court chapel of his personal residence on the model of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo merely the caprice of an eccentric sovereign or rather part of a broader phenomenon – a sort of ‘imported’ eclecticism – that responded to a specific political agenda or ambition? As we will see, both are probably the case: Ludwig’s personality was extremely peculiar, but it is also true that the choice of styles in his architectural commissions – be it the Gothic or the Italian Renaissance – was always a means for communicating symbolic or political messages. According to Eva Börsch-Supan, the Berlin court chapel designed in Byzantine style by Friedrich August Stüler is the direct response of Friedrich Wilhelm IV to the Munich court chapel commissioned by his brother-in-law a couple of years earlier. Indeed, the first sketch of the church was produced by Stüler soon after the king’s Italian trip in 1828.<sup>62</sup> The same question could be applied to the stylistic language of the church of the Redeemer in Bad Homburg commissioned by Wilhelm II: one may legitimately ask whether its outwardly compact, Romanesque appearance, magnificent neo-Byzantine interior, and carved portal that clearly refers to Apulian churches from the Frederician period is merely an eclectic mix or instead the expression of Wilhelmine imperial neo-Romanesque *Symbolarchitektur*.<sup>63</sup> I will attempt to answer these and other questions while bearing in mind the assumption that “historical *epochs* are not mere fictions. [...] In the

genesis of the thinking of modernity, the Middle Ages are the most important point of reference and, ultimately, the focal point of the very concept of modernity”.<sup>64</sup>

### Myths, ideologies, identities

Despite the wide range of formal, constructive, and decorative variations, many architectural expressions of the southern Middle Ages share a common feature: their role as a medium for self-representation and symbol of political authority. Beat Brenk has defined Norman architecture as a “purely dynastic government art, to an even greater degree than the government art of the Carolingians, Ottonians, Salians, and Hohenstaufens”.<sup>65</sup> A clear power symbolism is also evident in Swabian architecture and in Frederick II’s building program, as for example in the series of castles and fortifications spread throughout the Italian Mezzogiorno,<sup>66</sup> or in the intentional use of classical elements, such as those that dominate the character of some medieval constructions (most strikingly the Castel del Monte, and here to such an extent that many scholars have spoken of a Renaissance *ante litteram*). In Norman religious architecture, the re-use of *spolia* takes on the value of *ostentatio potentiae*, the most eloquent example being the Palatine Chapel in Palermo, a building fundamentally symbolic of King Roger II’s authority. Equally significant is the presence of Sicilian workmen, Byzantine mosaicists and Islamic architects in the Norman building workshops. The eclecticism that grew out of their collaboration gave the Norman state, a fledgling dynasty in search of its identity and disposed to go beyond the traditional boundaries of Western culture, its quintessential expression of cultural syncretism. The history of Angevin monuments is similarly bound up with monarchical ambitions. The monumentalization of Angevin church architec-

<sup>61</sup> My participation in *The Kingdom of Sicily Project*, a database project initiated by Duke University in 2011 that focuses on graphic sources related to medieval architecture of southern Italy from the Norman to the Aragonese period, has given me the opportunity to explore many archives and graphic collections in Germany and to discover a great number of new sources, mostly unpublished drawings. I am most grateful to the directors of the project, Caroline Bruzelius and William Tronzo, for this opportunity (URL: <http://www.dukewired.org/projects/the-kingdom-of-sicily-database/> Retrieved: January 8, 2016).

<sup>62</sup> BÖRSCH-SUPAN 1998, p. 107: “Seine Zeremonienkapelle ist die direkte Antwort auf die 1822 begonnene Allerheiligenhofkirche in München, bei der sein Schwager Ludwig I. unter dem Eindruck der Cappella Palatina in Palermo Klenze und Hess auf den byzantinischen Stil verpflichtete. Seine wahrscheinlich früheste Skizze [...] entstand wohl nach der Italienreise 1828.”

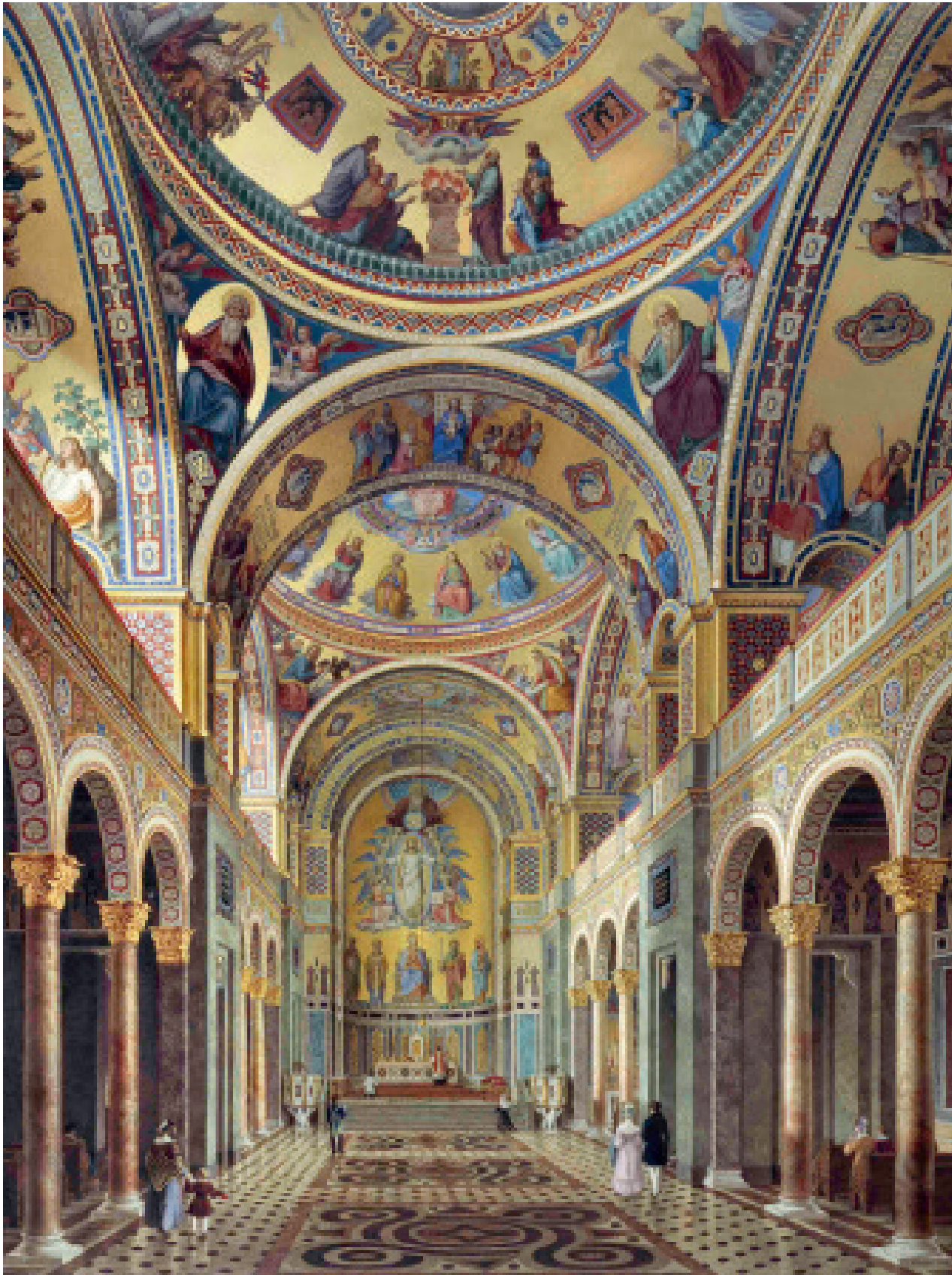
<sup>63</sup> Michael Bringmann investigates this question in his “Gedanken zur Wiederaufnahme staufischer Bauformen im späten 19. Jahrhundert” (BRINGMANN 1979).

<sup>64</sup> OEXLE 2004, pp. 12–13: “Die Fundamentalannahme dabei ist, daß solche historische Epochen [...] keineswegs bloße Fiktionen sind [...]. ‘Mittelalter’ ist in der Genese des Denkens der Moderne der fundamentale Bezugspunkt, an dem sich schließlich auch der Begriff der Moderne selbst ausrichtet.” Particularly in Germany and France, from Schinkel to Viollet-le-Duc, the Gothic becomes a foundational element in the historical awareness of modernity and in the elaboration of a method capable of a prospective critical gaze. On this issue, see also BERNABEI 2002.

<sup>65</sup> BRENK 1994, p. 193: “L’arte normanna era un’arte del governo puramente dinastica, ancora più dell’arte del governo dei Carolingi, degli Ottoni, dei Salii e degli Hohenstaufen.”

<sup>66</sup> GANGEMI 2010.





10. Franz Xaver Nachtmann, *Allerheiligenhofkirche in Munich, view of the nave*, watercolor, 1839. Munich, Stadtmuseum, G-51/402 (Foto Stadtmuseum Munich)



11. Charles Garnier, Anjou tomb in the church of S. Chiara in Naples, watercolor. Paris, École nationale supérieure des Beaux Arts, EBA 4662 (Foto ENSBA, Paris)

ture, the adoption of French forms and building traditions, and the evocation of the antique are all expressions of a political message. As we will see, the use of specific stylistic codes and imported architectural elements to reflect the prestige of those who commissioned the buildings was not only a medieval practice but also – and perhaps even more so – a feature of nineteenth-century Historicism.

In the previously mentioned neo-medieval *Allerheiligen-*

*hofkirche* in Munich, the court chapel commissioned by King Ludwig I of Bavaria in 1824, the architect Leo von Klenze quotes from Italian medieval models, in particular the Cappella Palatina in Palermo (fig. 10). What does this stylistic choice signify? Following a visit to the chapel in 1823, the sovereign was so impressed by the Norman masterpiece that he expressed the desire to have a church built exactly like it.<sup>67</sup> Ludwig’s enthusiasm for this building is not only a response to the beauty of the architecture and the richness of the decoration. The Sicilian church, in which Norman, Byzantine, Islamic, and ancient elements are bound together, was the representational building of King Roger II of Hauteville, and in this sense also a perfect model for Ludwig’s political and cultural ambitions, to equal the greatest sovereigns and patrons of the past.<sup>68</sup>

The gradual rediscovery and the international success of Norman architecture and its exuberant decoration can be observed in the way that architectural marvels like the Zisa and the Cappella Palatina in Palermo became objects of interest, admiration, and imitation in Italy and abroad. And what of the reception of Angevin and Swabian architecture? During the first decades of the nineteenth-century, travelers and architects were more interested in Norman architecture than in other medieval monuments. In the second half of the century, however, the situation shifted and the reception of southern Italian medieval architecture acquired considerably different dimensions and meanings, as we can observe by means of the following examples.

In 1853, the Duke of Luynes commissioned the young architect Charles Garnier, at the time a *pensionnaire* in Rome, to survey the Angevin tombs of the Kingdom of Sicily for a planned work on Angevin funerary monuments in southern Italy.<sup>69</sup> Garnier accompanied the Duke in the discovery of cathedrals, churches, and tombs in Campania and Calabria, and executed hundreds of drawings with accurate measurements of canopies, sarcophagi, sculptural decorations, reliefs, and myriad architectural elements (fig. 11). This impressive project was part of a general climate of the rediscovery of Romanesque and Gothic architecture, but also demonstrates the French enthusiasm for the Angevin architectural heritage, particularly strong at that time.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, Garnier and his

<sup>67</sup> “Solch eine Schlosskapelle will ich haben!” (quoted in ZIMMERMANN 1987, p. 216).

<sup>68</sup> During his reign (1825–1848), the influential art patron Ludwig I commissioned a great number of buildings. If we consider those realized in Munich, we can perceive not only his passion for art, antiquity, and Italy, but also the role played by architecture as an instrument of political propaganda. The Residence façade, for instance, is an imitation of Palazzo Pitti and the Feldherrnhalle in the Ludwigstrasse reproduces the Loggia dei Lanzi, the originals of which are in Florence (see

ROETTGEN 1991). Ludwig I supported the construction of copies of Italian buildings with major ideological significance. His choice of style was aimed at communicating a particular message and, as such, was always subordinated to the site for which the building was intended and, above all, to the symbolic power it was supposed to convey. The most comprehensive work on Ludwig I as a patron and customer of architecture is: NERDINGER 1987. See also NERDINGER 2000.

<sup>69</sup> The final plates for this never-published text are housed in the family castle in Dampierre. See GARNIER 1925, p. 378.

patron's interest in the Angevin tombs – great symbols of monarchic power and a significant patriotic heritage – can be understood as France's contribution to the historical knowledge of an important chapter of its own past.<sup>71</sup> In light of growing nationalist sentiment, an essential driving force in all fields of culture, art, and architecture during the nineteenth-century, is it possible to explain the special position occupied by the southern Middle Ages in the German and French medieval reception.

The Restoration climate across Europe favored a renewed focus on individual national cultural heritages: think only of Cicognara's history of sculpture and his Italian-centric vision of art history.<sup>72</sup> Driven largely by a patriotic and nationalistic agenda, the process of rediscovering medieval art and architecture is part of a broader phenomenon, namely the construction of the nation-state itself. Here, the nation was understood not as a geographical and political reality, but rather as a wider and more elusive entity – historical, as well as cultural, artistic, mythological, and even imaginary – with its roots in an ideal past, be it near or far (chronologically and/or geographically).<sup>73</sup>

“Throughout the nineteenth century the attempt to monopolize works of art and architecture in support of the national idea was a dominant objective in Europe”.<sup>74</sup> The importance of the arts in the construction of national identities has been investigated extensively. Among the arts, architecture has always enjoyed a special role, not only in expressing a country's character and image, but also in its political employment, architecture being the most powerful collective representation of a nation. In the latter case, as can be observed throughout the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century, architecture was an instrument for the promotion or legitimization of particular nationalistic messages.<sup>75</sup> Starting from the assumption that the ‘national’ character

which served as a paradigm in art history for so long is itself an historical – mostly nineteenth-century – construct and the result of adoptions and rejections of vernacular and foreign elements, the examples I present here show the process that led Germany and France to seek for their roots beyond their own borders and ultimately discover a piece of their ‘national’ architecture abroad. It should be pointed out that “history, however remote and mythical, served as the general denominator for all aspirations to national self-determination. It also served as the principal argument for any kind of territorial claims. [...] Art and architecture as the palpable manifestations of history had to operate within that ideological context – this fact is only rarely acknowledged when speaking about nineteenth-century historicism”.<sup>76</sup>

Frederician buildings like Castel del Monte and the Castle of Lucera in Apulia evoke in German travelers the image of the homeland and arouse emotional reactions and patriotic feelings, as may be seen in many passages of Ferdinand Gregorovius's travel account *Wanderjahre in Italien*. The Prussian historian highlights the “spiritual contacts” shared by Italy and Germany on account of their common political history – whose protagonists were the Hohenstaufen emperors – as well as other ideal and material connections linking the two countries. Thus, the view of the Castel of Lucera, an important historical site,<sup>77</sup> brings him back to his homeland: “All at once the vision of the Castle of Lucera seized me and carried me over Apulia's sunny mountains to a mountain ruin in distant Germany, to the legendary Hohenstaufens in Swabia and in amazement I strode across the broad historical paths that led from Frederick von Buren's lineage in the ancestral Swabian castle to Apulia and also that which had made the connection with the Castle of Lucera”.<sup>78</sup> In his vision the Hohenzollerns were the spiritual heirs of the Hohenstaufens, who had chosen Italy as the centerpiece for a worldwide empire.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Jean-François Bodin (1766–1829), French writer and historian, published in 1823 the *Recherches historiques sur l'Anjou et ses monumens*, one of the first comprehensive studies on the Angevin's history and architectural heritage. BODIN 1823.

<sup>71</sup> SAMÀ 2001, GIRAUD-LABALTE 1996.

<sup>72</sup> CICOGNARA 1824/2007, p. 46: “Ogni nazione ha diritto alla sua storia particolare in tutto ciò che la rende famosa, [...] e noi ci proponghiamo di esporre tutto ciò che riguarda il progresso dell'arte ove ha principalmente sfoggiato, [...] e quasi trascurando il resto d'Europa [...] si passino sotto silenzio gli sforzi delle altre nazioni.”

<sup>73</sup> The discovery (recovery, reconstruction, and invention) of the past is the central issue of Alain Schnapp's survey of the origins of archeology (SCHNAPP 1993). See also HOBBSAWM/RANGER 1983.

<sup>74</sup> PURCHLA/TEGETHOFF 2006, p. 7.

<sup>75</sup> Some aspects of the relationship between nationalism and style debate in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have been examined in BERGDOLL 2000. Interesting case studies on the rise of nationalism in Europe between 1860 and 1919 and its correlation with architecture are

also found in HARGROVE/MCWILLIAM 2005, ANDRIEUX/CHEVALLIER/NEVANLINNA 2006, POHLSANDER 2008, QUEK/DEANE/BUTLER 2012.

<sup>76</sup> PURCHLA/TEGETHOFF 2006, p. 11.

<sup>77</sup> After Frederick II's death and before the conquest of Anjou, Lucera (called *Lucaera Saracenorum*) was the largest Islamic colony and the last stronghold against the pope in Italy. In 1300 the colony was sacked by Christian forces under the command of Charles II of Anjou, and the Muslim inhabitants were exiled, sold into slavery or forced to convert to Christianity.

<sup>78</sup> GREGOROVIVUS 1880, p. 54: “Auf einmal entführte mich die Phantasie vom Kastell Lucera über die sonnigen Berge Apuliens hinweg nach einer Berggrüne im fernen Deutschland, nach dem Hohenstaufen im sagenreichen Schwabenland, und ich durchmaß mit Verwunderung die weiten Wege der Geschichte, welche das Heldengeschlecht Friedrichs von Büren aus der schwäbischen Stammburg in das apulische Land geführt, und jene auch mit der Burg Lucera in Verbindung gesetzt haben.”

<sup>79</sup> GREGOROVIVUS 1880, p. 58: “Die Hohenstaufen gingen unter, weil sie das fremde Italien zur praktischen Basis für ein weltgebietendes Kaisertum machen wollten. ‘Italien ist mein Erbteil!’ dies war das Wort Friedrichs II.”

A similar patriotic thread also winds through the “Reise-Eindrücke” (travel impressions) by the German art historian Paul Schubring, published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in 1900: “I have tried to attract the attention of the reader to places where tourists’ feet rarely walk, and I believe I have shown that it is indeed worthwhile to travel to Apulia. The flourishing Middle Ages in this region is so closely tied to the destiny of the West, and, in many cases, to that of the German homeland that its architectural evidence should also fill us with passion”.<sup>80</sup> The patriotic spirit of Schubring’s “impressions” is common to other German accounts of Italy, and invites a reading in connection with the broadest concept of ‘nation’ as a spiritual principle, patriotic feeling and cultural unity: in a word, the *Volkstum* theorized by Friedrich Ludwig Jahn.<sup>81</sup> One year later Schubring published the volume *Schloss- und Burgbauten der Hohenstaufen in Apulien*.<sup>82</sup>

As Camilla Kaul pointed out, “in the context of the formation of nations, a process that was increasingly set in motion throughout Europe after the late eighteenth century, certain local myths are utilized in all countries in order to create an internal sense of community and an outward demarcation of borders”.<sup>83</sup> The *Staufersmythos* is one of the most striking expressions of nineteenth-century German nationalism, and Heinrich VI and Frederick II are the mythical figures upon which the Germans based their theories of the intimate historical and artistic connections between Italy and Germany during the Middle Ages. Following German unification in 1870, Frederick II, “who conceived of and persistently pursued the sublime plan of a radical *immutatio mundi*, founded upon the central role of the imperial authority”,<sup>84</sup> in particular embodied the ambitions of the

new German Reich and served as a projection for national and political *Sehnsüchte*.<sup>85</sup> The art historian Oskar Mothes explains the German influence on Sicilian medieval culture and art through the massive presence of Heinrich VI’s officials in the south and, later, of Frederick II and the Teutonic Knights, who made a considerable contribution to the stylistic changes in the southern Gothic.<sup>86</sup> In Mothes’ opinion, many churches in Apulia and Calabria are reminiscent of Germany or show something of German early Gothic forms, and even more explicitly patriotic is a passage about the Palermitan palace built by the Sclafani family in the fourteenth-century: “The Sclafani, a German noble family, contended with the Chiaramonti. [...] Matteo [Sclafani], as legend has it, is said to have declared, when the Steri began its upward growth in 1330, that within a single year he would erect a much more splendid edifice than this [palace], which had already been under construction for decades. And he succeeded! The building is indeed larger and more beautiful than the Steri” (fig. 12).<sup>87</sup>

Reference to Frederick II and the investigation of his architectural enterprises in southern Italy becomes almost obsessive in German and French art historical literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. With regard to Hohenstaufen architecture, Mothes argues that “in all of these buildings French influence can neither be deduced from the forms nor substantiated from reports. In fact, it only begins to be detectable with the appearance of the Anjou in 1269”.<sup>88</sup> On this issue the French had a different opinion: indeed, they saw many affinities and links between the southern Middle Ages and their own architecture in France. For example Renan asserts that “the abbey of Monreale, the Cathedral of Cefalù, it is Saint-Étienne de

<sup>80</sup> SCHUBRING 1900, p. 2: “Ich habe den Leser in Gegenden zu locken gesucht, die der Fuß des Touristen selten durchweilt. Ich hoffe, ich habe gezeigt, daß es sich lohnt, auch in die Puglia herabzusteigen. Die mittelalterliche Blütezeit dieser Provinz ist zu eng mit den Schicksalen des Abendlandes und zeitweise gerade auch mit denen unseres Vaterlandes verbunden, als daß ihre monumentalen Zeugen uns nicht ein Stück Leidenschaft kosten sollten.” The German art historian Paul Schubring (1869–1935), an expert on the Italian Renaissance and teacher at the Scuola Internazionale di Bari, made a significant contribution to the rediscovery of medieval art in the Italian Mezzogiorno. Between April and May 1900, in the Feuilleton of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, Schubring published several articles devoted to Apulia and its medieval monuments. His interest in architecture grew out of his teaching experience and from his several trips to southern Italy. On nineteenth-century German travelers in Apulia, see SCAMARDI 1993.

<sup>81</sup> JAHN 1810.

<sup>82</sup> SCHUBRING 1901.

<sup>83</sup> KAUL 2007, p. 753: “Im Rahmen der Ausbildung von Nationen, ein Vorgang, der in Europa verstärkt seit dem Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts einsetzt, werden in allen Ländern bestimmte lokale Mythen herangezo-

gen, um ein Gemeinschaftsgefühl nach innen und eine Abgrenzung nach außen zu schaffen.”

<sup>84</sup> SETTIS 2010, p. 133: “[Friedrich II.], der den grandiosen Plan einer radikalen *immutatio mundi* entwarf und beharrlich verfolgte, die sich auf die zentrale Rolle der kaiserlichen Autorität gründete.”

<sup>85</sup> KAPPEL 2013, p. 168: “Nördlich wie südlich der Alpen diente Friedrich II. als Projektionsfläche für nationalstaatliche Sehnsüchte. Auch hat das sich bis nach Palermo und Jerusalem erstreckende spätstaufische Reich die Hohenzollern und später die Nationalsozialisten in ihren Großmachtträumen bestärkt.”

<sup>86</sup> MOTHEs 1883, pp. 575–76: “Heinrich VI. hatte deutsche Beamte nach Sicilien gebracht, den Bischof von Hildesheim als Statthalter eingesetzt, dem Deutscherorden mehrere Besitzungen verliehen etc. Der dadurch herbeigeführte Einfluß der Deutschen auf Cultur und Kunst Siciliens wurde zwar geschwächt, aber nicht völlig beseitigt durch die Verabschiedung deutscher Beamter unter Constantia.” Ibid., p. 637: “Angesichts dieser Thatsache ist wohl nicht zu zweifeln, daß die Deutscher nicht wenig zu der Stilwandelung beigetragen haben.”

<sup>87</sup> MOTHEs 1883, p. 585: “Mit den Chiaramonti wetteiferten die Sclafani, ein deutsches Geschlecht. [...] Matteo [Sclafani] nun soll, so ber-



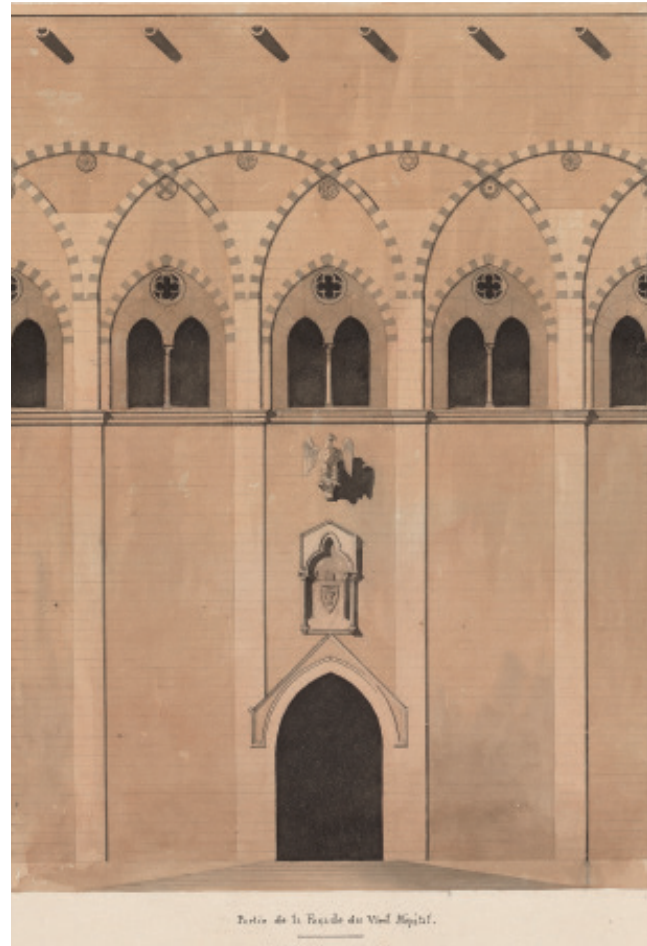
Caen adorned with mosaics and treated with details according to the Arab and Byzantine customs”<sup>89</sup> and attributes the Norman dynasty with a decisive influence on the creation of an art which at its time was the first in the world. In Émile Bertaux’s monumental *L’art dans l’Italie méridionale* (Paris 1904, fig. 13), the work that is considered the first modern art-historical study of southern Italian medieval monuments,<sup>90</sup> his hypotheses concerning the propagation of French art in southern Italy and the relationship between Frederick II’s buildings and French architecture are particularly interesting, not least because of the passionate debate they inspired. In Bertaux’s opinion, the most important examples of Swabian architecture in Sicily and Apulia were intimately related to French models: “In Sicily, like Apulia, the castles of Frederick are designed in Burgundian architectural style, or in that of the Champagne region”.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, he argues that “during the reign of Frederick II, French architecture became the common and official form of imperial art throughout the whole Kingdom of Sicily”.<sup>92</sup> Anything built during this period should be viewed in light of French constructive and decorative influences, and in consideration of the confirmed presence of French architects, workmen, and military engineers in southern Italian building workshops. “The most beautiful chateau in Italy and, without a doubt, in the world – concludes Bertaux in reference to Castel del Monte – is a masterpiece of the purest thirteenth-century Burgundian architecture”.<sup>93</sup>

A few years before the publication of Bertaux’ tome, another French art historian had also begun to study the southern Gothic and its relationship to French models. In 1894 Charles Enlart, a fellow at the *École Française* in Rome, published his *Origines françaises de l’Architecture Gothique en Italie*. While in Italy between 1889 and 1890, he researched the ‘import’ of the Gothic style from France into different Italian provinces by the major monastic orders. He argued that between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries the influence of the French Gothic, in particular the Burgundian and Occitan Gothic, was enormous in Italy.

ichtet die Sage, 1330 als der Steri emporzuwachsen begann, geäußert haben, er wolle in einem einzigen Jahr ein weit splendideres Gebäude errichten, als dieses, an dem nun schon seit Jahrzehnten gebaut werde. Und es gelang! Das Gebäude ist in der That größer und schöner, als der Steri.”

<sup>88</sup> MOTHES 1883, pp. 640–41: “Bei allen diesen Bauten ist französischer Einfluß weder nach den Formen anzunehmen, noch durch Nachrichten bewiesen. Nachweisbar beginnt er vielmehr erst mit dem Auftreten der Anjou’s 1269.”

<sup>89</sup> RENAN 1878, p. 80: “L’abbaye de Montréal, la cathédrale de Cefalù, c’est Saint-Étienne de Caen revêtu de mosaïques et traité dans le détail selon les habitudes arabes et byzantines.”



12. Prosper Morey, *Sclafani palace in Palermo, façade*, watercolor, 1836. Nancy, Bibliothèque-Médiathèque, M-FG-AL-00007-24 (Foto Bibliothèque-Médiathèque de Nancy)

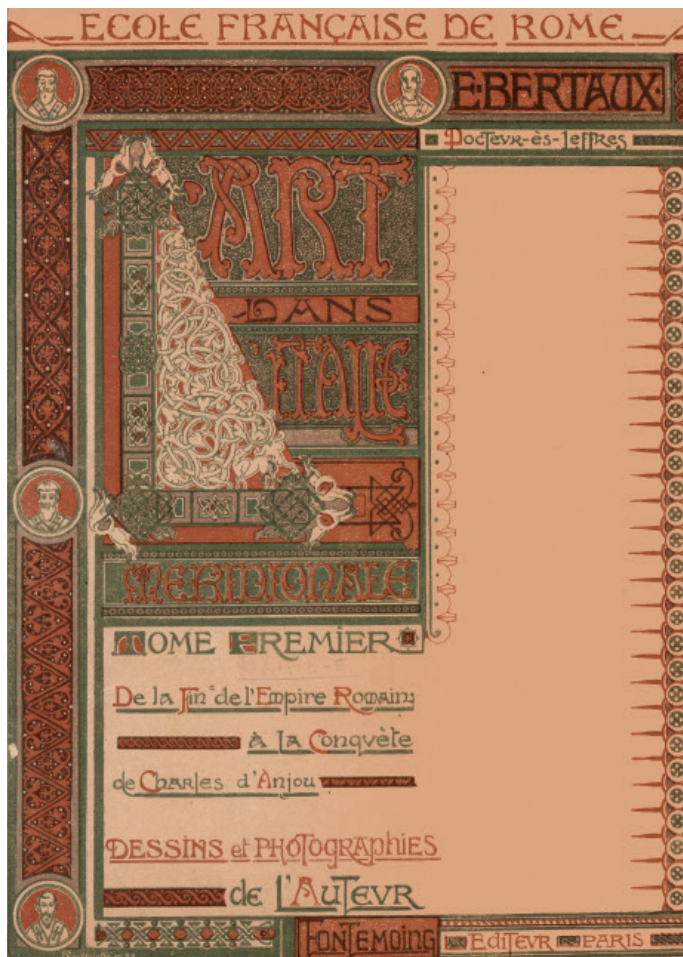
Each difference or deviation from the original (French) models, according to Enlart, was to be considered an “imperfect version” of the authentic Gothic style: “Many edifices, which may be characterized in Italy as the best examples of Gothic architecture, in comparison with the Ile-de-France represent only an imperfect Gothic or a transi-

<sup>90</sup> BERGMAN 1982, PAPA MALATESTA 2007.

<sup>91</sup> BERTAUX 1904, p. 741: “En Sicile, comme en Pouille, les châteaux de Frédéric sont d’architecture bourguignonne ou champenoise.”

<sup>92</sup> BERTAUX 1904, p. 745: “L’architecture française devient, au moins dans les dix dernières années du règne de Frédéric II, la forme commune et officielle de l’art impérial dans tout le royaume de Sicile.”

<sup>93</sup> Émile Bertaux, letter to Eugène Müntz, 7th January 1897 in PAPA MALATESTA 2007, p. 321: “Quant à Castel del Monte, [...] après l’avoir revu je n’hésite pas à aller beaucoup plus loin et à déclarer formellement, comme je puis le prouver mathématiquement, que le plus beau château d’Italie, et sans doute du monde, est un chef-d’œuvre de la plus pure architecture bourguignonne du XIIIe siècle.”



13. E. Bertaux, *L'art dans l'Italie Méridionale* (from BERTAUX 1904, frontispiece)

tional style”.<sup>94</sup> A review of Enlart’s work, published in the *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* by the German art historian Georg Dehio, confirms this theory and contains an interesting remark about the concept of “colonial art”: “For half a century, in Italy Gothic was just a style practiced in French monasteries; I would call it colonial art. It does not undergo any development, nor does it exert any influence

<sup>94</sup> ENLART 1894, p. 4: “Beaucoup d’édifices qui peuvent être considérés, en Italie, comme les types les mieux caractérisés de l’architecture gothique ne représentent, par rapport à l’Île-de-France, qu’un style gothique imparfait ou de *transition*.”

<sup>95</sup> DEHIO 1894, p. 382: “Ein halbes Jahrhundert lang, ist die Gotik in Italien ein lediglich in französischen Ordensniederlassungen geübter Stil, ich möchte sagen, eine Colonialkunst. Sie macht keine Fortentwicklung durch, sie übt keinen Einfluss auf ihre Umgebung (ausgenommen den südlichen Kirchenstaat, wo sich an Fossanova und Casamari eine, übrigens wenig lebenskräftige, italienisch-gothische Schule anschliesst). Dasselbe gilt von den der zweiten Hälfte des 13. Jahrhunderts ange-

on its surroundings. [...] The same is true of Anjou architecture in the kingdom of Naples dating from the second half of the thirteenth-century”.<sup>95</sup> Today, a number of new studies have radically revised not only this idea of cultural colonialism but also the cliché of the servile imitation of French or other precedents. As a consequence, our view of the southern Gothic, with its various and heterogeneous components, both autochthonous and imported, Mediterranean and European, has and will continue to become richer and more multi-faceted.<sup>96</sup>

Despite the success and popularity of his book, Bertaux’s Francocentric interpretation of southern Italian medieval architecture, and over-emphasis – at the expense of other important contributors – of the weight of the French cultural legacy during Frederick II’s reign excited immediate reactions on many fronts. Heinrich von Geymüller used his essay *Friedrich II. und die Anfänge der Architektur der Renaissance in Italien* (Munich 1908) to stress the central role of the German emperor in the birth of the Italian *Nationalstil*, the Renaissance. According to Geymüller, the origins of the Renaissance were to be sought in the Italian Middle Ages, and more specifically at Frederick’s court, where the first union between the Gothic and the Antique took place. Thus, the *Imperator stupor mundi* became the father and symbol of Renaissance art, as well as the author of this fruitful reunification – an a grand event in world history.<sup>97</sup> At the same time, Geymüller questioned Bertaux’s assumption that Apulian Castel del Monte was the creation of a French or Burgundian *Meister* capable of combining different elements (Gothic structures, French capitals, classical motives) in one extraordinary structure. Rather, it seemed more likely to him that the builder was an Italian who had been educated in France, or in the school of a Cistercian abbey in Italy. Geymüller suggested the name of Niccolò Pisano, but ultimately left the attribution an open question while also admitting that the building’s uniqueness and ‘ideal’ character made it difficult to overcome the desire to uncover the identity of the builder or – at the very least – his nationality.

hörenden Bauten der Anjous im Königreich Neapel.”

<sup>96</sup> According to Caroline Bruzelius, “what is unique about the architecture of the Angevins in the Kingdom of Naples is not so much its ‘Frenchness’ as its ability to incorporate certain French ideas within an architectural framework that reflected, and sometimes reinvented, the traditional structural language of southern Italy. [...] The Mediterranean exposure of the kingdom [of Naples] meant that it was always at the crossroads of trade, ideas and travel east to west and north to south; the Mediterranean was the ‘highway’ to the East and the Holy Land, and Naples was one of the central stations en route” (BRUZELIUS 2004, pp. VIII–IX).

<sup>97</sup> GEYMÜLLER 1908, p. 12.

Nationality seems to be a subject of great importance in many other artistic issues of the epoch. At the heart of the discussion, we find the two rival nations – Germany and France – with the strongest sense of national affiliation, whose competition in the research on Norman and Swabian architecture in south Italy had already begun before the mid-nineteenth century, in the second half of the century took the form of outright antagonism.<sup>98</sup>

One might wonder whether or not Italian scholars took part in the debate, defending the authorship of the local architecture against cultural colonialism of this sort. Many nineteenth-century Neapolitan historians and scholars deplored the lack of a national and indigenous character in local late Gothic, and “the fact that so many key works of art from the late Middle Ages were produced by artists from outside the *Regno* who were hired by foreign monarchs”.<sup>99</sup> But the best example of such involvement is provided by the violent reaction of Giovanni Battista Nitto de Rossi, archivist and historian from Bari, to Bertaux’s theories about the French influence on Italian Gothic. In an article published in *Napoli nobilissima* in 1898 entitled “An answer to Emilio Bertaux on the supposed influence of French art in Apulia at the time of Frederick II” the author, referring to an article published in the same magazine one year earlier,<sup>100</sup> criticizes and argues against Bertaux’s interpretation with vehemence, responding that the chauvinism and prejudices obfuscating Bertaux’s mind “distort the history of our medieval art”.<sup>101</sup>

In hindsight, we can see that neither Bertaux, Geymüller, or De Rossi (whose vision was even more contorted and tendentious) was completely in the right or free from prejudice. Until recently, scholarship concerning the southern Gothic was afflicted by simplifications and clichés, most of them born of the historical framework I have outlined

above, as well as many others established in the twentieth-century. These simplifications contributed to enormous confusion regarding the architectural production of the southern Middle Ages, whose eclecticism lends itself in particular to this kind of manipulation.

The larger ideological content of nineteenth-century architectural theory is well known and can be observed in the scholarly literature on the southern Middle Ages by French and German authors up to the early twentieth-century. As Kappel pointed out in his essay on southern Italian research at the Bibliotheca Hertziana, Haseloff’s monumental work *Die Bauten der Hohenstaufen in Unteritalien* (Leipzig 1920) is nothing if not the German answer to Bertaux’s publication, as well as the German attempt to affirm its supremacy through cultural policy. This ambitious interdisciplinary research project was promoted and sponsored by Kaiser Wilhelm II, who launched it in 1905 at the Preußisches Historisches Institut in Rome after a trip to Apulia to visit Norman and Hohenstaufen architecture.<sup>102</sup> A few years earlier, the architect Franz Heinrich Schwechten had studied the most famous examples of Norman architecture in Palermo on behalf of his patron Wilhelm II, recording them in watercolors and sketches in order to utilize these historical precedents in his own designs (fig. 14).<sup>103</sup> Wilhelm II was especially interested in southern Italian medieval architectural culture because he saw historical and symbolic connections between the Hohenzollern and the Norman and Hohenstaufen dynasties, a point Arthur Haseloff explains better than any other writer: “More than ever we feel that Greeks and Italics, the East and the West, the Greek and the Roman-German empire have all come together on this soil since ancient times. [...] Apulia, the region that has been forgotten by travelers of all nations but has enchanted the few who have beheld it, the last of whom no less than Kaiser Wilhelm II. [...] So grand in her enormous

<sup>98</sup> KAPPEL 2013, p. 168: “Vor Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts gab es um die normannischen und staufischen Bauten Süditaliens erste Forschungskonkurrenzen zwischen Deutschen und Franzosen, genannt seien nur die Namen Heinrich Wilhelm Schulz (1808–1855) und Alphonse Huillard-Bréholles (1817–1871).”

<sup>99</sup> Among them, Bernardo De Dominicis and Benedetto Croce (CASKEY 2004, p. 209).

<sup>100</sup> BERTAUX 1897.

<sup>101</sup> NITTO DE ROSSI 1898, p. 129: “Il signor Emilio Bertaux, descrivendo i monumenti medioevali delle regione del Vulture, volle dare ai suoi amici napoletani il riassunto di un’importante scoperta: ‘la storia dell’architettura francese importata sotto gli Svevi nell’Italia Meridionale’. [...] Non ostante che l’archeologo francese neghi di lasciarsi trasportare da un patriottismo esagerato, è proprio questo che gli ha annebbiata la mente. [...] Il Bertaux segue l’indirizzo di altri scrittori suoi connazionali, che non dubitano di foggiare in maniera le testimonianze storiche da costringerle alla dimostrazione che dalla Francia in ogni

tempo è uscita ogni luce di civiltà. Come egli abbia applicato questo preconcetto studiando l’arte dell’Italia Meridionale al tempo svevo, lo vedremo esaminando il saggio che ci ha dato delle sue ricerche.”

<sup>102</sup> In 1904, on the occasion of Wilhelm’s II visit to Apulia, Italian architect Ettore Bernich published a book entitled *Andria e reminiscenze sveve* he dedicated to the Emperor (BERNICH 1904). The intensification of research on the age of the Swabian emperors and their architectural enterprises in southern Italy led in 1905 to the foundation of a section of the history of art at the German institute.

<sup>103</sup> Drawings, watercolors, and travel sketches of Sicilian buildings (among them decorative details of the Cappella Palatina and of the Monreale Cathedral) made by Schwechten during his second Italian trip in 1896 are conserved in the Architekturmuseum of the Technische Universität Berlin and in the Geheimes Preußisches Staatsarchiv Berlin. The itinerary of this journey is unknown. We have more information about an earlier Italian trip he made in northern-central Italy in 1869–70.





14. F. H. Schwechten, *Cappella Palatina in Palermo*, mosaic decoration, watercolor, 1896. Berlin, Architekturmuseum der Technischen Universität, 46381 (Foto Architekturmuseum Berlin)



15. E. Mirbach, *Die Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtniskirche* (from MIRBACH 1897, frontispiece)

monuments, so powerful in her proud historic memories, which are so tightly bound to ours".<sup>104</sup> The emperor clearly pursued nationalistic and imperialistic goals to which historiography, as well as fine arts and architecture, contributed in equal measure.

The idealization and instrumentalization of the past is evident in the building program of the Wilhelmine era as well. Once again, the patriotic emotional climate of German culture before World War I played a significant role in the revival of the architectural heritage of medieval southern Italy. Some artistic choices and the related theoretical constructions are better understood when viewed in light of the fact that "young nation-states such as Germany had to legit-

imate their existence by reference to their national character; [...] this, however, did not mean that they limited their perspective merely to their own country. On the contrary, openness to other cultural entities, perceived as 'part' of their own history, became necessary steps on the path of recognition of one country's national culture".<sup>105</sup>

In Franz Schwechten's Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church in Berlin, one of Wilhelm II's most important commissions, elements of Gothic, Romanesque, Byzantine and Swabian architecture can be recognized. In a book published on the occasion of the church's consecration in 1897 (fig. 15), the author Ernst von Mirbach,<sup>106</sup> expressly referring to the different influences it encompasses, provided a stylistic defini-

<sup>104</sup> HASELOFF 1906/1991, p. 35: "Stärker als je empfinden wir aber, daß auf diesem Boden seit uralter Zeit Griechen und Italiker, Orient und Okzident, das Griechische und das römische-deutsche Kaisertum zusammenstießen. [...] So ist Apulien, das Land, das vergessen ist von den Reisenden aller Nationen, und das die wenigen, die es gesehen, so

sehr begeistert hat, zuletzt keinen Geringeren als Kaiser Wilhelm II. So abwechslungsreich [...] so groß in seinen gewaltigen Denkmälern, so mächtig in seinen stolzen geschichtlichen Erinnerungen, die mit den unseren so eng verknüpft sind."

<sup>105</sup> CORTJAENS/DE MAEYER/VERSCHAFFEL 2008, p. 17.

tion that explains the ultimate symbolic purpose of the building. The description of the church sounds like a manifesto for what was supposed to be an ‘original’ expression of the German *Geist*: “The church is designed in the Late Germanic style, the so-called transitional style, which should be designated ‘Germanic’ and not ‘Romanesque’. This style was developed in a unique and grandiose way by the German people and in the German constructions attained its most fascinating and complete flowering. Its origins reach back to Early Christian and Byzantine architecture, the distinguishing characteristic of which is the constant exchange between Italy and Byzantium. [...] This architecture embodies the development of the Germanic heart and sensibility. [...] The Normans imported the style to England; they combined it in Apulia and Sicily in an artistic and splendid way with Byzantine and, in particular, Arabic motifs, and created the most wonderful mosaics in the world by Byzantine masters. [...] The many surviving buildings in Apulia and Sicily from the Norman and Hohenstaufen period are of incomparable magic. Under the well-educated son of Barbarossa, Henry VI, thanks to the richly talented and artistic Arabs, they reached their apogee”.<sup>107</sup>

The reference to Henry VI, German king, Holy Roman emperor and, as heir of William II, king of Sicily from 1194 to 1197, is not accidental, but serves explicit national and political interests: son of Frederick Barbarossa – one of the great German national myths<sup>108</sup> – and father of Frederick II, he extended his dominion to the Kingdom of Sicily through his marriage to Constance of Hauteville,<sup>109</sup> thus representing the historical link between southern Italy and Germany. Wilhelm II’s idea of a *Kaisertum* ideally connecting past and present, East and West, medieval and modern

emperors was supported by historical evidence, and in this context the ideological and formal appropriation of the heritage of the ancient emperors became part of a political plan. The fact that no relevant architectural or artistic enterprise was actually ascribable to Henry VI was of no great importance, since national myths do not necessarily require historical reality.

Wilhelm’s Memorial Church is a classic example of eclectic contamination in which elements and motifs from a range of centuries, countries and cultures have been intentionally combined. They are drawn from German to Sicilian, from Byzantine to Arabic art. This stylistic blend was given the suggestive name ‘Germanic style,’<sup>110</sup> and is symptomatic of an effort to construct a national identity rooted in a nostalgic ideal of a fictional past. Self-referential architecture that is dominated by the intention to show political power is linked with ideology, in this case with the imperialist policy of the German Reich, whose nationalist rhetoric was at its height during this period. In the words of Jean-Louis Cohen, “architectural history [was] mobilized in order to produce mythical narratives indispensable to policies of occupation or colonization”. Significantly, Cohen speaks about “history as a vehicle for legitimacy” as a common feature of the three primary totalitarian regimes of the twentieth-century: Nazism, Fascism and Stalinism.<sup>111</sup>

A few years later the voice of the Italian writer, art critic and journalist Ugo Ojetti would be raised in defense of Italian culture against the dominion of the foreign intellect and in particular, of the German *strapotenza*, in his 1913 essay entitled “La difesa della nostra civiltà” (The defense of our civilization).<sup>112</sup> In an historic moment in which “almost all

<sup>106</sup> Ernst von Mirbach was a Prussian lieutenant general and court official, and chairman of the Protestant Church Building Association in Berlin.

<sup>107</sup> MIRBACH 1897, pp. 163–64: “Die Kirche ist im spätgermanischen, dem sogenannten Übergangsstyl entworfen. ‘Germanisch’ und nicht mit dem falschen Worte ‘Romanisch’ sollte man den Styl bezeichnen, welcher sich bei germanischen Volksstämmen eigenartig herausbildete und in den deutschen Bauen seine lieblichste und vollendetste Blüte erreichte. Sein Ursprung reicht in die aus der antiken hervorgegangene altchristliche und byzantinische Baukunst, deren charakteristisches Merkmal die stete Wechselwirkung zwischen Italien und Byzanz ist. [...] Die Entwicklung deutschen Herzens und deutschen Sinnes ist in ihm verkörpert. [...] Die Normannen übertrugen den Baustyl nach England, sie vermischten ihn in Apulien und Sizilien in künstlerischer und glänzender Weise mit byzantinischen und besonders arabischen Motiven [...] und schufen die herrlichsten Glasmosaiken der Welt. [...] Die in Apulien und Sizilien zahlreich erhaltenen Bauten aus der Normannen- und Hohenstaufen-Zeit sind von unvergleichlichem Zauber. Sie erreichten unter Barbarossas feingebildetem Sohne Kaiser Heinrich [...] ihre höchste Blüte.”

<sup>108</sup> The recent publication *Von Palermo zum Kyffhäuser. Staufische Erinnerungsorte und Staufermythos* (Von Palermo 2012) investigates the mythologization of the Hohenstaufen dynasty in Germany and Italy from the late Middle Ages onwards, and focuses on the symbolic significance of the emperors Frederick Barbarossa and his grandson Frederick II in the nineteenth-century historiographic debate as symbols of German unity, grandeur, and ‘national character.’

<sup>109</sup> Constance of Hauteville (1154–98), daughter of Norman King Roger II, was the last descendant of the Norman kings of Sicily.

<sup>110</sup> It should be remembered that the exigency of a definite “Germanic” national style had already arisen and been theorized in the 1840s: in 1841 Rudolf Wiegmann, architect and professor from Düsseldorf, published in the *Allgemeine Bauzeitung* an essay entitled “Gedanken über die Entwicklung eines zeitgemäßen nationalen Baustyls” (WIEGMANN 1841) and in 1845 the architect Friedrich Wilhelm von Horn published his *System eines Neugermanischen Baustils* (HORN 1845). Both texts testify the general desire for a new, national style of architecture.

<sup>111</sup> COHEN 2008.

<sup>112</sup> OJETTI 1913, p. 5.

the peoples of Europe stand covered with weapons and blood ready to defend or reconquer, with supreme effort, their political borders or possibly reach their ethnic and natural boundaries”, Ogetti wonders if “it is legitimate for us Italians at least to define and defend the ideal borders of our art and our civilization [...] against the fatal dominion of the German race over Europe and over the world through the force of arms and culture”.<sup>113</sup>

## Conclusions

The popularity of the Hohenstaufen dynasty and a nostalgia for its architecture enjoyed a heyday in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but the patriotic glorification of heroic figures from the Middle Ages such as Frederick Barbarossa and Frederick II remained in the German imagination during the whole of the Weimar Republic, and even more so, in the Third Reich.<sup>114</sup> In general, the interest in medieval architecture and the revival of Romanesque forms continued unimpeded up to World War II: we may point for example to the religious architecture of German architects

like German Bestelmeyer, Albert Bosslet and Dominikus Böhm and to the ideological background of the medieval reception during the Weimar Republic.<sup>115</sup> Indeed, the aestheticization of the Middle Ages as the ideologization of history<sup>116</sup> and the approach to medieval models as a utopical reaction against modernity are important media of Nazi propaganda.

Still, World War I marked a total break in European history, which in architecture led to new paths and new models, with a more universal vocation as a reaction to the stylistic declinations of nineteenth-century Historicism. We must consider that in 1920 Le Corbusier prepared the first project of *Maison Citrohan*, and in 1923 published *Vers une architecture*, both works that mark a definitive turning point in the history of modern architecture. Furthermore, from this point on, the tradition of the Grand Tour acquires completely new meanings, although Italy still remains an important source of inspiration for architects and artists. Ideas taken from ancient and medieval architecture are no longer transformed into architectural or decorative solutions, but instead transposed into abstract, conceptual models or symbolic values such as light, color, volume, space, structure.

<sup>113</sup> OJETTI 1913, pp. 5–7: “Quasi tutti i popoli d’Europa sono in piedi, coperti d’armi e di sangue, tesi a difendere o a riconquistare con uno sforzo supremo i loro confini politici e forse a raggiungere i loro confini etnici e naturali [...] è lecito a noi italiani definire e difendere almeno i confini ideali dell’arte nostra e della nostra civiltà [...] contro il fatale dominio della razza germanica sull’Europa e sul mondo per forza d’armi e di cultura?”

<sup>114</sup> In her essay on the *Stauferrezeption* from an art historical viewpoint, Camilla G. Kaul highlights the fact that the decline of Historicism in the twentieth century did not equate to the end of the Hohenstaufen myth, which still persisted, though with differing aims and in different fields (KAUL 2010). On the Hohenstaufen reception in the twentieth century, see also SCHREINER 2012.

<sup>115</sup> On the Gothic as an ‘ideological category’ in Germany after World War I see NIGRO COVRE 2002. In this article the author offers an overview of the appearances of gothicism in German culture after World War I, and explains their correspondence to specific ideological meanings. From Bruno Taut’s utopian projects to Worringer’s racial interpretation of the Gothic, the medieval revival between the wars enjoyed a proliferation of manipulative symbologies. See also Magdalena Bushart’s interesting survey on the relationship between Gothic and Expressionism (BUSHART 1990).

<sup>116</sup> BRÜLLS 1994, p. 153.



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