Relics of the Past

Antiquarianism and Archival Authority in Enlightenment Germany

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ANTIQUARIANISM AND ARCHIVAL AUTHORITY IN ENLIGHTENMENT

GERMANY

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ABSTRACT

During the Early Modern period, many scholars described the ideal historian as a person, who personally had experienced the events. However, the skeptical critique of the trustworthiness of testimonies increasingly undermined this ideal and some scholars attempted to identify sources that should not be considered as testimonies, but rather as "relics" of the historical situation. Some of these sources were antiquarian sources, such as coins, inscriptions, and monuments, but German historians especially emphasized the importance of legal and official documents stored in state archives. These documents, they insisted, were not only more reliable than eyewitness accounts, but also better historical evidence than all other material remains of the past. The use of these sources in historical research also helped shape the modern ideal of the historian as an archival researcher. To illustrate these changes, the paper focuses upon the example of the Göttingen historian Johann Christoph Gatterer, who is often considered one of the founders of modern critical historical research.

I. THE GRAVESTONE

Around New Year 1770, a local clergyman in Quedlinburg in the Harz, named Georg Christoph Hallensleben, went for a short stroll outside the city walls to the nearby village of Münzenberg. On his way, Hallensleben noticed a remarkable medieval gravestone, which had been used in the construction of one of the Münzenberg houses, a former guesthouse, and now had been exposed by a mudslide. The clergyman, who had strong antiquarians interests, studied the stone in the sharp light of the afternoon sun and was soon convinced that he had discovered the gravestone of Henry the Fowler, the founder of the Ottonian Dynasty of Saxon kings and Emperors and thereby also of the Holy Roman Empire, who, according to local legend, had been buried in Quedlinburg after his death in 936. Hallensleben immediately reported to the authorities and, on January 27th 1770, the Hamburg *Correspondenten* publicized the story. The paper praised his "inquiring eyes," and claimed that the finding was "a very remarkable discovery" which "sends a great light into history and enlightens many dark points about which history writers could never agree."[1] Two days later, the Halle *Gelehrte Anzeigen* published an anonymous retort, which questioned that the gravestone belonged to Henry and concluded that even if the discovery "was correct, which it is not and cannot be, then it would truly be useless, or at least an insignificant trifle, for history."[2] Thus, Hallensleben's discovery threatened to become yet another frontline in the ongoing battle about antiquarianism, which during the previous few years had resulted in several divisive and polemical writings, most prominently Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Briefe, antiquarischen Inhalts*, published in two volumes in 1768 and 1769.[3]

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[1] Reprinted in J. C. Gatterer, *Praktische Diplomatik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1799), 142-143.

[2] Gatterer, *Praktische Diplomatik,* 146.

[3] For a recent overview, H. B. Nisbet, *Gotthold, Ephraim Lessing: His Life, Works, and Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 413-422.

While Lessing and his opponents primarily wrote about classical ancient art, and not German medieval gravestones, both disputes concerned the importance of antiquities for the understanding of history as well as role of amateurs and connoisseurs in such discussions.

The controversy about the Quedlinburg gravestone, however, did not continue long. Already in 1770, Johann Christoph Gatterer, who was professor of history at the University of Göttingen, intervened.[4] Gatterer produced a balanced rapport, which argued for the historical value of the gravestone, but, at the same time, proved that it could not have belonged to Henry the Fowler. The rapport ended the dispute and was shortly after published in *Allgemeine Historische Bibliothek* as an example of the proper application of historical research techniques. In the rapport, Gatterer did not base his scholarly authority upon intimate knowledge of medieval antiquities and monuments. He also did not claim special insights into the history of Quedlinburg or the biography of Henry the Fowler. Instead Gatterer based his conclusions about the gravestone upon his knowledge of archival documents. Thus, the case of the gravestone illustrates the emergence of a new kind of historical authority and how this authority could be transferred across contested scholarly boundaries, from archival research to antiquarianism.

Figure I. Reproduction of the gravestone in Johann Christoph Gatterer, *Praktische Diplomatik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1799), 146. Courtesy: Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Copenhagen.

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[4] For a thorough and comprehensive treatment of Gatterer and his academic work, see M. Gierl, *Geschichte als präzisierte Wissenschaft: Johann Christoph Gatterer und die Historiographie des 18. Jahrhunderts im ganzen Umfang* (Stuttgart: Fromman-Holzboog, 2012).

II. THE STATESMAN AND THE HISTORIAN

During the Early Modern period, the proper historian was normally described as someone with personal and immediate experience of the events.[5] The statesman, who had witnessed the making of history, was also the person, who could describe this history most vividly and credibly. Thus, there was no distinction between the eyewitness and the historian. One should prefer history *seen* to history *heard* or *read* and if an eyewitness account existed this account had precedence before later historical works. However, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, European scholars increasingly questioned if any historical testimonies could be considered trustworthy. The eyewitness might have privileged access to events, but personal viewpoints - loyalties, opinions and emotions – most likely also colored his account. For later readers, it would therefore be almost impossible to understand what really happened in the past.[6] Partly in response to this skeptical critique, known as historical Pyrrhonism, many eighteenth-century scholars argued for a more professional approach to the past and history writing increasingly became an academic enterprise.[7] The University of

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[5] For an overview and discussion, J. M. Sawilla, "Das Zeugnis des Historiographen. Anwesenheit und gestufte Plausibilität in der Geschichtsschreibung der Frühen Neuzeit", *Zeugnis und Zeugenschaft: Perspektiven aus der Vormoderne*, eds. W. Drews and H. Schlie (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2011), 311-335.

[6] On Early Modern historical Pyrrhonism, see M. Scheele, *Wissen und Glaube in der Geschichtswissenschaft: Studien zum historischen Pyrrhonismus in Frankreich und Deutschland* (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1930), M. Völkel, "*Pyrrhonismus historicus*" und "*fides historica*": Die Entwicklung der deutschen historischen Methodologie unter dem Geschichtspunkt der historischen Skepsis* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1987), and G. Schlüter, ed., *Historischer Pyrrhonismus* special issue of *Das Achtzehnte Jahrhundert*, 31, 2 (2007).

[7] Also, H. W. Blanke, "Historiker als Beruf: Die Herausbildung des Karrieremusters 'Geschichtswissenschaftler' an den deutschen Universitäten von der Aufklärung bis zum klassichen Historismus", *Bildung, Staat, Gesellschaft im 19. Jahrhundert: Mobilisierung*

Göttingen played an important role in this development. When the Hannoverian government founded the university in 1734, it not only established an independent chair in history, which before Gatterer's arrival in 1757 was occupied by Johann David Köhler, but also appointed several faculty members with historical interests in other fields.[8] Gatterer continued this effort and worked tirelessly to unify the growing community of historical scholars. In 1764, he created the world's first institute for specialized historical research, the *Königliche Institut der historischen Wissenschaften zu Göttingen*. The following years, he launched two specialized journals for historical research, *Allgemeine historische Bibliothek*, where his rapport on Münzenberg gravestone appeared, published from 1767 to 1771, and its continuation *Historische Journal*, published from 1772 to 1781. He also produced numerous textbooks, especially in technical so-called "auxiliary sciences" [*Hülfswissenschaften*] such as heraldry and genealogy, for students interested in historical research.[9]

Gatterer also emphasized how the academic approach to the past distinguished him and his contemporaries from earlier historians. In 1768, for example, he compared

und Disziplinierung, ed. Karl-Ernst Jeismann (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1989), 343-360. Also, N. Hammerstein, *Jus und Historie: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des historischen Denkens an deutschen Universitäten im späten 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972), K. Jarausch, "The Institutionlization of History in 18th-Century Germany," *Aufklärung und Geschichte: Studien zur deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft im 18. Jahrhundert*, eds. H. E. Bödeker, G. G. Iggers, J. B. Knudsen, and P. H. Reill (Göttingen: Vandenhock & Ruprecht, 1986), 26-48, and H. W. Blanke and D. Fischer, eds., *Theoretiker der deutschen Aufklärungshistorie*, vol I: *Die theoretische Begründung der Geschichte als Fachwissenschaft* (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1990), 19-102.

[8] R. Vierhaus, "Göttingen und die Anfänge der modernen Geschichtswissenschaft", *Geschichtswissenschaft in Göttingen*, eds. H. Boockmann and H. Wellenreuter (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 9-29. Also, Luigi Marino, *Praeceptores Germaniae: Göttingen 1770-1820*, trans. into German Brigitte Szabó-Bechstein (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995).

[9] Gierl, *Geschichte als präzisierte Wissenschaft*. Also, for a summary of his contributions to the auxiliary sciences, M. Gierl, "Mit der Hilfe der Wissenschaften: Johann Christoph Gatterers Objektivierung der Geschichte mithilfe von Hilfswissenschaften", *Akademische Wissenskulturen: Praktiken des Lehrens und Forschens vom Mittelalter bis zur Moderne* (Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2015), 277-300.

himself to the great Augustan historian, and author of the monumental *Ab urbe condita*, Livy. Apart from their sanguine temperaments, promoting "a certain lightness and liveliness" of expression, Gatterer found few similarities.[10] If he should publish a new history of ancient Rome, a "modernized Livy," this book would not be the work of a pagan Roman, but that of a citizen of an enlightened Protestant German-speaking state.[11] Almost two millenniums had past and each of them had their "place" [*Standort*] and their "viewpoint" [*Gesichtspunct*]. Their approaches to historical scholarship and interpretations of Roman history would therefore be very different. According to Gatterer, however, the temporal distance between the world of Imperial Rome and that of the Hanoverian Electorate was not the most important difference between him and Livy:

The greatest difference between Livy and me probably expresses itself in regard to the way of life [*Lebensart*]. I am no statesman, like him; I am a scholar, a professor; I know the larger world more from books than from experience … I have since my youth studied the history and constitution of all known people from the most ancient times to our day and for more than 14 years the calling – for which I thank providence – have committed me even more to this kind of knowledge … I do not deny that everywhere, despite all efforts to the contrary, the professor and the study

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[10] J. C. Gatterer, "Abhandlung vom Standort und Gesichtspunct des Geschichtschreibers oder der teutsche Livius," *Allgemeine historische Bibliothek*, 5 (1768), 3-29, on page 11. Also, for a comparison with Herodotus that discusses the particular value of eyewitnesses, see , J. C. Gatterer, "Vorrede von der Evidenz in der Geschichtskunde," *Die Allgemeine Welthistorie die in England durch eine Gesellschaft von Gelehrten ausgefertiget worden: In einem vollständigen und pragmatischen Auszuge*, ed. F. E. Boysen, vol. 1 (Halle: Gebauer, 1767), 1-38, on the pages. 28-29.

[11] Gatterer, "Abhandlung vom Standort", 13

come to sight. The way of life into which one has been habituated, cannot be completely denied.[12]

While the ancients often were better writers than contemporary scholars, the standardized methods of inquiry and instruction opened a more dependable road to the past. His academic background, Gatterer even claimed, granted him a better overview and understanding of political history than Livy. Thus, the most reliable historian was not the statesmen, who had experienced the events, but the academic, who knew the sources and the modern research techniques. In 1770, Gatterer used the case of the Münzenberg gravestone to showcase the strength of these techniques and to illustrate that the professional historian not always had to rely upon the word of past eyewitnesses. Unlike the other participants in the dispute, he ignored the written testimonies about Quedlinburg history as well as testimonies about Henry the Fowler's death and burial. Without any signs of irony, he even questioned if the recent articles in the Hamburg *Correspondenten* and the Halle *Gelehrte Anzeigen* were trustworthy. The dates of publication were suspiciously close, so maybe someone in Quedlinburg was just trying to ridicule Hallensleben. But this, Gatterer declared, did not belong "to the essence of the dispute [*zum Wesen des Streits*]."[13] What mattered was only the evidence and conclusions that could be derived from the physical gravestone itself.

III. RELICS OF THE PAST

In eighteenth-century German scholarship, as Arnaldo Momigliano already pointed out, one popular answer to the skeptical critique of testimony was to point to sources

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[12] Gatterer, "Abhandlung vom Standort", 14-15.

[13] Gatterer, *Praktische Diplomatik,* 133.

that could be considered non-testimonial, that is sources that did not offer narrative accounts of the past, but instead themselves were "relics" of past events, such as coins, medals, inscriptions, and monuments. Some written and archival sources were also considered as non-testimonial. [14] The German school of "Imperial history" [*Reichshistorie*], to which Gatterer belonged, especially emphasized the value of certain kind of documents, known in Latin as *diplomata* and in German as *Urkunden*.[15] The conventional English translation would be charters or acts, but German scholars used the word more broadly to describe official and legally binding documents.[16] Following the tradition of Jean Mabillon's *De re diplomatica* of 1681, they also cultivated the art of deciding the age and authenticity of *diplomata*, known as *Diplomatik*. German scholars were not primarily interested in these documents because of their value as

[14] A. Momigliano, "Ancient History and the Antiquarian", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 13, (1950), 285-315. For recent discussions, P. N. Miller, ed., *Momigliano and Antiquarianism: Foundations of the Modern Cultural Sciences* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), and, concerning the question of historical evidence, M. Völkel, "Historischer Pyrrhonismus und Antiquarismus-Konzeption bei Arnaldo Momigliano", *Das Achtzehnte Jahrhundert*, 31 (2007), 179-190. For a recent discussion of the history of the concept of antiquarianism as well as its significance for the changing standards of historical credibility, J. M. Sawilla, *Antiquarianismus, Hagiographie und Historie im 17. Jahrhundert: Zum Werk der Bollandisten. En wissenschaftshistorischer Versuch* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2009), 237-294, and "Vom Ding zum Denkmal: Überlegungen zur Entfaltung des frühneuzeitlichen Antiquarianismus", *Europäische Geschichtskulturen um 1700 zwischen Gelehrsamkeit, Politik und Konfession*, eds. T. Wallnig, T. Stockinger, I. Peper and P. Fiska (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 405-446. Also, C. Zwink, *Imagination und Repräsentation: Die theoretische Formierung der Historiographie im späten 17. und frühen 18. Jahrhundert in Frankreich* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2006), 83-124.

[15] Also, on the school of Imperial history, N. Hammerstein, "Reichs-Historie," *Aufklärung und Geschichte: Studien zur deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft im 18. Jahrhundert*, eds. H. E. Bödeker, G. G. Iggers, J. B. Knudsen, and P. H. Reill (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 82-104, and M. Stolleis, *Geschichte des öffentlichen Rechts in Deutschland*, vol. I (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1988), 302-304.

[16] For some later definitions, see J. C. Gatterer, *Elementa artis diplomaticae universalis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1765), 5, *Handbuch der Universalhistorie nach ihrem gesamten Umfange*, vol. 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1765), 30, and *Abriss der Diplomatik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1798), 1. Also, J. C. Adelung, *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der Hochdeutschen Mundart*, vol. 4 (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1801), 963.

historical sources, but rather because of their legal significance within the Holy Roman Empire. Since the Middle Ages, the Empire had offered a framework for interactions between the German-speaking states, even across confessional boundaries, and its legal institutions, the *Reichshofrat* in Vienna and the *Reichskammergericht* in Wetzlar, protected longstanding privileges and freedoms, some of which were as ancient as the Empire itself. *Diplomata* were therefore important resources in legal disputes and knowledge of *Diplomatik* was an important qualification for an Imperial jurist.

The primarily educational purpose of the school of Imperial history was to train future Imperial jurist. The "only reason" for his textbook on Imperial history, the Halle professor and founder of the school Johann Peter von Ludewig declared in 1735, was "that one, who is occupied with the law, learns to judge that which has occurred in the Empire and, through constant searching and exercise, to distinguish what should be considered justice and injustice [*recht und unrecht*]."[17] The present was connected to the Medieval past through the institutions and laws of the Empire. In all other countries, Ludewig claimed, historical research served nothing but "just knowledge" because "the state in these have faulted and transformed."[18] Cumbersome investigations into past "justice and injustice" were therefore here irrelevant and "not worth the effort."[19] This, according to Ludewig, also explained why most ancient and modern writers on the "art of history" recommended that the historian should only rapport "what has happened" [*was geschehen*] without judgement.[20] In the German states, things were different. The

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[17] J. P. von Ludewig, *Rechtliche Erleuterung der Reichs-Historie von erstem Ursprung biß 1734* (Halle: In Verlag der neuen Buchhandlung, 1735), 81-2. Also, J. P. von Ludewig, *Vollständige Erläuterung der Güldenen Bulle*, vol. II (Frankfurt am Main: Daniel Christian Hechtel, 1719), 1465, 1474-5.

[18] Ludewig, *Rechtliche Erleuterung*, XCI.

[19] Ludewig, *Rechtliche Erleuterung*, XCIII-IV. Also, Ludewig, *Vollständige Erläuterung*, 1465-8.

[20] Ludewig, *Rechtliche Erleuterung*, XCIII-IV

Empire had remained intact for almost a millennium and its laws sustained even older German freedoms, as testified in Ancient Greek and Roman writings. The German jurist-historian's most important task was to uncover and to reaffirm these bonds between this ancient free constitution, which had been "confirmed and sustained" through many "Imperial fundamental laws" [*Reichs-Grund-Gesetze*], and the modern German states.[21]

Ludewig was aware of the skeptical critique of historical testimonies. As a young scholar, in the 1690s, he even applied this critique to archives and archivists, whom he described as equally unreliable.[22] However, Ludewig also pointed to some categories of sources that could be considered as trustworthy. These included antiquarian sources, but, as a legal historian, Ludewig was especially interested in *diplomata.* Between 1720 and 1741, he published 12 folio volumes of manuscript "relics" [*reliquiae*], which primarily consisted of *diplomata*, and in his lectures and writings he often emphasized the particular value of these sources for historical research.[23] For example, in his lectures on German history, which one of his former students gathered from lecture manuscripts and student notes and published after his death, Ludewig shortly summarized the European discussions about historical Pyrrhonism and explained how his students could avoid the problem of "doubt":

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[21] Ludewig, *Rechtliche Erleuterung*, XCI. Also, on the concept of fundamental law in Early Modern Europe, Martyn P. Thompson, "The History of Fundamental Law in Political Thought from the French Wars of Religion to the American Revolution," *American Historical Review*, 91 (1986), 1103-28, especially, on German Imperial history, 1121-4.

[22] Also, on Ludewig and the use of archival sources, K. R. Eskildsen, "Inventing the archive: Testimony and virtue in modern historiography", *History of the Human Sciences*, 26, (2013), 8-26.

[23] J. P. von Ludewig, *Reliquiae manuscroptorum omnis aevi diplomatum ac monumentorum, ineditorum adhuc*, 12 vols. (Frankfurt am Main, 1720-1741).

But where in history should one really doubt or not? Answer: One investigates what in [history] is called certain and uncertain. That is certain which one can prove from the sources of historical certainties. And these are: 1) *diplomata*; 2) coeval authors; 3) coins; 4) inscriptions and epitaphs; 5) seals; 6) statues; and finally 7) pictures. *Diplomata* belong among the most distinguished sources. For they are 1) written with the foreknowledge of the prince and 2) flown from the feathers of the most learned men, who therefore had the best knowledge. 3) They are about official business and therefore cast the greatest light on matters of state.[24]

IV. LINNEAN GRAPHICS

In Göttingen, Gatterer continued the tradition of Ludewig and the school of Imperial history. He taught *Diplomatik* to future Imperial jurists, and wrote expert opinions for court cases, but also argued for the importance of *diplomata* for historical reseach.[25] In his plan for the *Königliche Institut der historischen Wissenschaften zu Göttingen,* he demanded that no one could become a member, who did not already know or was willing to learn the art of *Diplomatik.*[26] Gatterer also developed an almost mechanic procedure for the reading of *diplomata*, which should remove any "doubt" about the age and authenticity of the documents. Following Gatterer's directions, one should start with "graphics" [*Graphik* or *Graphica*], including not only the style and form of writing, but also the material conditions of these sources, such as if they were written on parchment or paper, the size and location of wormholes, the color and composition of

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[24] J. P. von Ludewig, *Erläuterte Germania Princeps, das ist: Historisch-Politsch- und Rechtliche Anmerckungen über Desselben Teutsche Fürsten-Staaten*, ed. H. von Finsterwald (Frankfurt am Main, 1744), 13.

[25] For example, Gatterer, "Vorrede von der Evidenz," 24.

[26] On Gatterer and *Diplomatik*, Gierl. *Geschichte*, 128-161. Gierl quotes Gatterer's condition for membership on page 139.

the ink, etc. In each case, Gatterer's carefully listed the known variations. For the analysis of the script, he had even developed a "Linnaean Graphics" [*Linnaeismus Graphicus*], where different forms and shapes of letters had been divided according to Linnaean categories, replacing the Swedish botanist's three realms of nature – animals, plants and minerals – with the four realms of script – artificial, book, notary, and private (in a later versions, he reduced this to three realms by collapsing notary and private realms into the "diplomatic realm" [*Urkundenschrift-Gebiet* or *regnum diplomaticum*]). Like Linnaeus, Gatterer further subdivided these realms into class, order, series, genus, and species.[27] Unlike Linneaus' natural classification system, however, Gatterer's system placed scripts, within typological categories, in chronological series. The primary function of the system was not to uncover an immutable structure, but rather to determine the historical and geographical origins of particular scripts. After analyzing "graphics," one should move on to "semiotics" [*Semiotik* or *Semiotica*] which included the interpretation of seals, symbols, and monograms, and, finally, one turned to the "art of formulas" [*Formelkunde* or *Ars formularia*]. These symbolic representations and formulas, Gatterer also sorted in different typological categories and subdivided in geographical and historical sequences. Thus, by comparing different traits, one could identify the likely place of origin and age of a document and thereby also decide its authenticity.[28]

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[27] Gatterer, *Elementa,* 81-86. Also, Gierl, *Geschichte als präzisierte Wissenschaft*, 187-217, and M. Gierl, "Das Alphabet der Natur und das Alphabet der Kultur im 18. Jahrhundert,: Botanik, Diplomatik, Linguistik und Etnographie nach Carl von Linné, Johann Christop Gatterer und Christian Wilhelm Büttner", *NMT Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Wissenschaften, Technik und Medizin*, 18, (2010), 1-27.

[28] For an example of how Gatterer used this method in practice to determine the authenticity of a document, see Gatterer, *Praktische Diplomatik*, 110-130.

Figure II. A table illustrating that a document, attested by Otto I in 970, can only be from the tenth century and, thus, can be considered "true." Gatterer reaches this conclusion solely on the basis of "graphic" and "semiotic" traits. Gatterer, *Praktische Diplomatik*, tab. X. Courtesy: Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Copenhagen.

When Gatterer in 1770 decided the case of the supposed gravestone of Henry the Fowler, he based his authority upon his mastery of this mechanic method for analyzing legal and official documents. The script of the gravestone belonged in the "artificial realm" of inscriptions, but Gatterer wrote with the authority of the historian, who specialized in archival documents and especially documents relating to the legal history of the Holy Roman Empire. He named his rapport a "diplomatic expert opinion" [*diplomatisches Gutachten*] and a "diplomatic response" [*diplomatisches Responsum*], like the opinions he wrote for court cases, and only quoted diplomatic reference works. The characteristics of the gravestone were similar to those of *diplomata* and its origin could therefore be decided by following the steps of his diplomatic method. Already his investigation of "graphics" revealed that style of the letters was "neogothic" and, in his Linnaean taxonomy of script, belonged to the *Genus Thulemarium*. Thus, the gravestone must have been made in thirteenth century or later. Moving to "semiotics", Gatterer compared the gravestone to the engravings in Anton Ulrich von Erath's *Codex diplomaticus Quedlinburgensis* of 1764 and thereby determined that the coast of arms belonged to Hoym noble family. He further argued that the iconography was that of a knight rather than of a king. Thus, in different ways, Gatterer proved that the gravestone must be that of the knight Friedrich von Hoym and not that of the founder of the Holy Roman Empire, Henry the Fowler.

Figure III. Table of genera of Roman letters in Johann Christoph Gatterer, *Elementa artis diplomaticae universalis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1765). The table lists the *Genus Thulemarium* second from the top in the right column. Gatterer placed the genus in the artificial realm, the neogothic series, and further subdivided it into four different species. Courtesy: Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Copenhagen.

Figure IV. Reproductions of coats of arms in Anton Ulrich von Erath, *Codex diplomaticus Quedlinburgensis* (Frankfurt am Main, 1764), table XXXII. The register lists 8, 10, 11, 14, 15, 20 and 21 as belonging to members of the Hoym family. Courtesy: Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Copenhagen.

V. THE PROBLEM OF REPRODUCTION

Eighteenth-century scholars sometimes admitted that the use of non-testimonal evidence was also problematic. Archival sources and ancient monuments were unique and often not easily accessible. One therefore relied upon the skill and credibility of other historians and editors, who were not always trustworthy. "Everywhere," Gatterer lamented about the low quality of German source-editions, "it is teeming with errors. Some originate from uneducated reading, thus from ignorance, others from carelessness, many also from an unauthorized and presumed freedom to improve the text of the writer"[29] In the case of the Münzenberg gravestone, Gatterer nonetheless relied upon two drawings that had been sent to him in Göttingen as well as Hallensleben's detailed

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[29] J. C. Gatterer, "Nähere Nachricht von der neuen Ausgabe der gleichzeitigen Schriftsteller über die Teutsche Geschichte," *Allgemeine Historische Bibliothek*, 8 (1768), 3-22, on page 10.

description.[30] Gatterer knew that such second-hand descriptions of ancient artifacts often were not more reliable than source editions. This had become especially clear in connection with the controversies about antiquarianism and the works of the Halle professor Christian Adolph Klotz. During the 1760's, under the influence of Johann Joachim Winckelmann's writings, Klotz launched a campaign for the revival of antiquity through the study of ancient artifacts. These artifacts, he argued, not only opened a road to an otherwise unknown, emancipated, and pagan world, but also helped liberate the dedicated antiquarian from the narrow mindset of his contemporaries and educated his taste and sense of the beautiful. Through the study of antiquities, the antiquarian could learn to live, think, and feel like an ancient. Klotz's provocative project was the primary reason for the academic controversies about antiquarianism, and he and his followers were the main targets of Lessing's polemical attacks in *Briefe, antiquarischen Inhalts.*[31]

One important question in the conflict between Lessing and Klotz was how one best approached the distant past. Lessing argued that ancient works of art were highly conventional and insisted the study of antiquities therefore only offered a limited understanding of the ancient world. Texts remained the most informative sources. Klotz, on the contrary, claimed that antiquities offered a more immediate experience of the past. This immediate experience, however, demanded that one studied the originals. Just like testimonies, engravings and drawings of ancient artifacts could not be trusted. In his book on ancient engraved stones, published in 1768, Klotz for example argued that most illustrations in antiquarian works misrepresented the originals and did not capture their beauty. Even the best engravings, such as those by Bernard Picart, were

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[30] Gatterer, *Praktische Diplomatik*, 133-134.

[31] On Klotz and his followers, also W. Kawerau, *Aus Halles Literaturleben* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1888), 187-229.

not relics of the past and using them was therefore, according to Klotz, like "borrowing the eyes of other people."[32] This problem was further enlarged by the sprawling industry in Rome that produced counterfeit stones for the Northern European market of collectors. To determine if an engraved stone was a forgery required closer inspection and, Klotz admonished, one had to reserve judgment about the authenticity "when one has not seen the stone oneself."[33] Most scholars and students were also not able to distinguish between the levels of quality of printed engravings and ended as "the kindhearted people, who patiently listen to travelers and consider all stories as true."[34] Gatterer wrote much less about antiquities than Klotz, but, in his methodological writings, he expressed similar concerns about reproductions and, for example, warned against judging "a statue of Hercules [or] a coin of Emperor Augustus, if one does not have the original."[35]

Both Klotz and Gatterer attempted to find practical solutions to the problem of reproduction. Klotz thought he had solved the problem through imprints of engraved stones, because these were produced immediately from the ancient artifacts themselves. He especially relied upon Philipp Daniel Lippert's popular collections, which used techniques from ceramics production to create imprints that were more durable than wax and much cheaper and less fragile than brimstone copies.[36] Gatterer did not revert

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[32] C. A. Klotz, *Ueber den Nutzen und Gebrauch der alten geschnittenen Steine und ihre Abdrücke* (Altenburg: Richterische Buchhandlung, 1768), 64.

[33] Klotz, *Ueber den Nutzen*, 131.

[34] Klotz, *Ueber den Nutzen*, 73.

[35] Gatterer, "Vorrede von der Evidenz", 27.

[36] Also, U. R. Hansson, "Die Quelle des guten Geschmacks ist nun geöffnet: Philipp Daniel Lipperts Dactyliotheca Universalis", *Tankemönster. En festskrift till Eva Rystedt*, eds. F. Faegersten, J. Wallensten, and I. Östenberg, (Lund: Faegersten, 2010), 92-101, and C. Kerschner "Philipp Daniel Lippert (1702-1785) und seine Daktyliothek zum 'Nutzen der Schönen Künste und Künstler,"

to technical solutions, but instead argued that *diplomata* themselves could solve the problem of reproduction. Because they were formulaic, one could determine their authenticity on the basis of copies. "The formulas," Gatterer explained, "always betray the forger, and indeed in most cases even more reliably than the attributes of the original solely according to graphics and semiotics." *Diplomata* therefore possessed "as if double the truth of coins and other antiquities." And, he concluded, "from this follows that diplomatic proofs are capable of more evidence than all other kinds of historical proofs; it also follows from this that the history writer is obliged to prefer diplomatic proofs, as often as they can be had, before all other kinds of proofs."[37] In 1770, by treating the Quedlinburg gravestone as a *diploma* and drawing upon his experience in *Diplomatik*, he acquired a similar advantage in regard to antiquities.

VI. THE CREDIBILITY OF THE HISTORIAN

Some formulations in his rapport on the gravestone, however, revealed that reproductions were still not enough. Gatterer repeatedly emphasized the importance of experience and embodied skills. For example, he considered the identification of the coat of arms beyond doubt because: "I, even before I read the writing around the gravestone, immediately at the first sight recognized Hoym's coat of arms."[38] While he praised Hallensleben for his antiquarian zeal, he concluded his rapport with the comment that "the explanation and judgment of such antiquities" required more than

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Daktyliotheken: Götter & Caesaren aus der Schublade: antike Gemmen in Abdrucksammlungen des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts, *Daktyliotheken*, eds. V. Kockel, D. Graepler, and G. Angelova (Augsburg: Biering & Brinkmann, 2006), 60-68.

[37] Gatterer, "Vorrede von der Evidenz," 27-8. Also, *Handbuch der Universalhistorie,* 74-77.

[38] Gatterer, *Praktische Diplomatik*, 140.

just "good, generous will."[39] Knowing the past was only possible if one had adopted particular habits of thinking and working. Lessing had in *Laokoon*, published in 1766, emphasized that proper understanding of art demanded not only access to art, but also a specialized skills and a particular scholarly character. One should not just enjoy the immediacy of art, as the "connoisseur" [*Liebhaber*], or know the general principles of aesthetics, as the philosopher, but, through the study of the conventions of different art forms and time periods, become an "art critic" [*Kunstrichter*].[40] Lessing's problem with Klotz was not least that he claimed to be an art critic, and even was held a professorial chair, but nonetheless behaved and argued like a connoisseur. Hallensleben was not a professor, but he was a connoisseur who posed as an antiquarian.

Gatterer not only promoted a scholarly approach to the past through his writings, but also through his personal example. Many contemporaries noted how Gatterer's personality fitted his style of inquiry. One example is the Swedish scholar Johan Hinric Lidén, who, for a year during the 1760s, visited Göttingen and participated in Gatterer's class on *Diplomatik*. Lidén here observed how the preoccupation with *diplomata* – in Swedish *Diplomer* – colored almost everything about the professor. After his first visit to Gatterer's house, Lidén noted that he had a "philosophical, yes entirely document-like [*diplomatisk*], appearance" and that they talked about "nothing but *Diplomer* and manuscripts."[41] Later, after a meeting of the Göttingen Historical Institute, Lidén remarked that Gatterer had been criticized for producing officially looking "*Diplomer*" for local students, who attended as "observers" and that the Institute could change name

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[39] Gatterer, *Praktische Diplomatik*, 142.

[40] G. E. Lessing, *Laokoon: oder über die Grenzen der Mahlerey und Poesie* (Berlin: Christian Friedrich Voß, 1766).

[41] J. H. Lidén, *Dagböcker*, vol. 2, MS X 397, Uppsala Universitetsbibliotek, 187.

to the "Diplomatic Institute" [*Institutum Diplomaticum*].[42] During class, Lidén marveled at Gatterer's large collection of documents and noticed that while Gatterer lectured over the principles of his textbooks, "he always has original *Diplomer* at hand."[43] In 1775, one booklet, preparing law students for the University of Göttingen, similarly described Gatterer's the course on *Diplomatik*, through the peculiar scholarly character of Gatterer:

> The *Diplomatik*, the science [*Wissenschaft*] of how to read, judge and use *Urkunden*, can be learned nowhere better than with Gatterer. No scholar can easily collect as many *Urkunden* as him, no one cuts as many diplomatic writings, no one is the Linneaus of *Diplomatik* like him. His German diligence, his large knowledge of history, of heraldics, makes the study easier for him. He has an amazing amount of original and printed *Urkunden*, monograms, chrisms, seals of all kinds, and playfully one learns this science with him. One learns to understand his textbook masterpiece and to love this science, which so many avoid, with delight. Old documents that we drag out of dusty archives, old seals that we tear out of the hands of the needlewomen, are as beloved by us as gold and with the greatest delight we ruin our eyes on obscure, unreadable script.[44]

Gatterer's authority and credibility also rested upon his personal collection of such material. In his house on Alleestraße in Göttingen, he had gathered, in the words of one

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[42] Lidén, *Dagböcker*, 197.

[43] Lidén, *Dagböcker*, 245. Also, for other similar descriptions, Gierl, *Geschichte als präzisierte Wissenschaft*, 152-153.

[44] Carl Boell, *Sendschreiben über die Anfrage in was für einem Zustand sich die Rechtsgelehrsamkeit auf der blühenden Georg Augusta befinde* (Colmar, 1775), 27.

of his colleagues, "all kinds of paper and other writing materials, also entire collections of alphabets, chancellor-emblems, monograms, seals, and entire *Urkunden*, partly originals, partly also drawings and engravings."[45] He also had borrowed several documents from the state archives and bought many more himself. These documents he used for his classes on *Diplomatik*, as his students reported, but they also served as evidence for his theories. References to these unique documents often appeared in his diplomatic rapports, including in the one about the Münzenberg gravestone. Thus, to support his claim about the coat of arms, he not only referred to the printed seals in *Codex diplomaticus Quedlinburgensis*, but also informed his readers: "I have separated this series of seals for my diplomatic cabinet and show them here publicly (at the gathering of the Historical Institute) for additional assurance."[46] Thus, in the end, the truthfulness of the historical account still depended upon the credibility of eyewitnesses. History *seen* remained better than history *heard* or *read*. Only now historians did not observe the historical events, but instead gazed at archival documents and ancient artifacts, produced by these events.

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[45] J. S. Pütter, *Versuch einer academischen Gelehrten-Geschichte von der Georg-August-Universität zu Göttingen*, vol. I (Göttingen: Vandenhoek, 1765), 273.

[46] Gatterer, *Praktische Diplomatik*, 140.