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The Palace in Mind

Charlemagne's Palace at Aachen: Imagination and Reality

ABSTRACT

Charlemagne's palace complex in Aachen has developed a rich afterlife in reconstruction attempts over the last 200 years. The effords reached from ground plans and pictorial (and pittoresque) impressions to haptical models and digital reconstructions. The prevailing image of how the palace looked like in Carolingian times was on the one hand the result of scientific research, but on the other hand had a considerable influence on it. The urban planning interventions carried out in the city centre of Aachen in the immediate vicinity of the Carolingian remains in the 19th and early 20th centuries and their digestion in the protected zone of the Aachen Cathedral World Heritage Site have led to a manifestation of a state of research in the built framework of church and hall that is now outdated. This article examines these processes and describes the immediate surroundings of the magnificent Carolingian buildings in Aachen in their historical development as a result of research and staging.

KEYWORDS

Charlemagne / Aachen palace / reconstruction / influence on urban planning / world heritage site

Aachen, as Charlemagne's »favourite palace« and seat of power in his old age, can be found in all medieval architectural surveys. No other Carolingian palace has so much substance preserved in its surviving masonry as Aachen, and no other royal palace has so much to tell us from such diverse written sources as Aachen[1]. In the years around 800, it was from here that »early Europe was decisively shaped politically and culturally« as a Christian, Latin-influenced region, »in which ancient writing was revived and our present-day script was created with the Carolingian minuscule«[2]. To this day, the city lives through the myth of Charlemagne, which it always knows how to use in new ways, both internally and externally. In the centuries-old discourse on the power and prestige of Aachen, the secular and ecclesiastical elites were able to establish and underpin its status among the cities of Europe – a status that repeatedly began and ended with Charlemagne's tomb and throne in Aachen's Church of St Mary and has continued to exert influence on Charlemagne's reception[3].

1 Cf. Müller et al. 2013, 1-408 with the older literature; briefly on the state of research, with various contributions, in Pohle 2014a and Heckner/Beckmann 2012; Pohle 2015a; with regard to Aachen, alas already outdated when it appeared: Jacobsen 2017.

2 Kerner 2001, 238.

3 Tschacher 2009, 29-35; Pohle 2010.

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Problems of Research

As a result, there has been no lack of research on the palace of Aachen in the Carolingian period[4], even if it has suffered from certain basic problems that still have a significant influence on our present picture of what was there in former days. The focus should not be on the complaints about poorly published excavations, autodidacticism and a lack of methodological awareness – this is common for the research history of most early medieval palaces. Nor is it primarily the one-sided fixation on Charlemagne's tomb that is to be deplored: as a key site in German history, it has been identified for decades as the main interest of all planned ground interventions in the palace area at Aachen and must be described as guiding knowledge in the consideration of the findings[5]. More lamentable, however, is the »power of the archaeological imperative« (C. Ehlers), which determines the interpretation of the findings: in short, the »power of images« we have in mind when we are talking about Aachen palace[6].

The »archaeological imperative« consists of the historian telling the archaeologist what to find based on his knowledge of the written sources. For a long time (and sometimes still today), if excavators did not select their excavation areas from the outset according to what should be found and after analysing the written sources, they were reliant on interpretations of written sources from the Carolingian and post-Carolingian periods and interpreted their findings according to the findings of medieval research.

Sometimes, findings that did not initially fit into the picture gained from the sources were interpreted in a way that made them fit – even though we still lack knowledge about the very central areas of the building and the settlement topography of the Aachen palace[7]. This was all the more possible because it was difficult to date the features accurately until very recently: the scientific methods were not available, the pottery series were still faulty, and walls were usually dated according to their direction, their position under the soil, the building technique and the type of mortar used. In many cases, it is impossible to say what prompted an excavator to classify a wall (or a sherd) as »Carolingian«, »Merovingian« or »Frankish« in the 19th and early 20th centuries, as the documentation is often inadequate or the surviving commentaries have not been authenticated[8].

Another complicating factor was that older research on Aachen tended to equate »Carolingian« with »the lifetime of Charlemagne«. The search was always for Charlemagne's palace complex – the fact that numerous written sources also report building activities in Aachen from the time of Louis the Pious usually went unnoticed or was interpreted as an indication of the continuation and completion of planning already undertaken under Charlemagne[9]. However, even Charlemagne's grandson Lothar I and great-grandson Lothar II were present in this palace as well and still issued a good half of the documents that were handed down in Aachen[10]. A mighty building between the King's Hall and the church, long thought to be a gateway, probably dates from the 880s[11].

The concentration on the Charlemagne period meant that building phases were dealt with in very narrow time frames and very little is known about later additions, conversions and extensions to the palace. There is no clear picture at all of the palace of Aachen in the Hohenstaufen period, for example, during which further alterations must have been made[12].

And this brings us to the »power of images«. Reconstructions, additions, atmospheric impressions or even just fundamental interpretations – as in the case of Aachen, for example, the *Roma secunda* debate, which was conducted from around 1940 until the 1980s[13] – have a lasting effect on the image in people's minds. *Roma secunda* – the Aachen palace as an imperial palace, programmatically built by Charlemagne as a »new Rome« using references to Roman and Byzantine buildings and building types, and including all the set pieces, such as an equestrian statue, the wolf and the pine cone, in an effort to prove that he was the unrestricted ruler of the Christian West through his imitation of Rome and reception of Byzantium.

4 Pohle 2015b; briefly Pohle 2014b.
5 Cf. Pohle 2014d.
6 Cf. in detail already in Pohle 2021,
7 Cf. Pohle 2015b, 16. 485-486; furthermore Falkenstein 2002 and already Falkenstein 1970.
8 Cf. Pohle 2015b, 15-16.
9 Cf. Ristow 2014; Pohle 2015b, 16.
10 Cf. Müller et al. 2013, 366.
11 Cf. Pohle 2015b, 372-373; Giertz 2005/2006.
12 Cf. Kraus 2015, 360-366 (Zur Topographie der Innenstadt).
13 The *Roma-secunda* debate is associated with illustrious names such as C. Erdmann, H. Beumann, H. Fichtenau and W. Schlesinger, who attempted to reconcile the architectural findings at the Aachen palace with considerations of Byzantine palace construction, emperorship and the imperial idea, and in general with Charlemagne's conception of rule. See also the anonymous verse epic *De Karolo Rege et Leone Papa*, a fragment whose dating is disputed, which describes the meeting between Charlemagne and Pope Leo III in Paderborn in 799 and their lively life in Aachen with many allusions to, and borrowings from, ancient poetry. Cf. Pohle 2015b, 4. 260-261.

Fig. 1 Bird's-eye view of the Aachen palace complex by C. Rhoen, c. 1860/1870. – (Illustration from the author's archive).

Even if this thesis of Aachen as a new, second Rome, and as the intended political and spiritual centre of a »nascent Occident«[14] and »capital« of the Frankish Empire was often problematic and disputed, it nevertheless determined the image of the palace in the minds of researchers as a kind of »mythical superstructure«. In the case of Aachen, it can certainly be observed that the research tended to fit new findings into an existing overall picture of the palace, which as a rule was oriented towards the prevailing reconstruction proposal of the overall complex. In addition, the Aachen palace findings had to be presented to a larger audience. With the awakening of »modern museology« after the First World War, the didactic goal was a model whose creation was a culmination of the research activity on several occasions: in 1925 for the Millennium Exhibition, in 1965 for the Charlemagne Exhibition, in 2000 for the Coronation Exhibition, and again in 2014 for the Charlemagne Exhibition[15].

There was a latent danger that new finds and excavations would only describe what we thought we already knew, and that this would be reinforced by interventions in the urban space in the case of partial reconstructions and fundamental urban planning decisions. So the thesis is that the way we perceive the palace of Aachen – whether in the preserved, remodelled and staged form, or as wooden and paper structures – determines to no small extent what we think we know about it. Some of the buildings mentioned in the sources can be located more closely by using reasonable assumptions based on the numerous, though not very coherent, written testimonies, but an overall picture of the Aachen palace organism does not emerge from this, despite the fact that there was no lack of research spirit and creativity. How should we imagine the palace of Aachen? Should we see it in the same way as C. Rhoen, who as early as 1889 presented a general map showing the masonry thought to be Carolingian and, taking into account the written sources and the city's topography, laid out earlier a reconstruction in plan and elevation which, incidentally, was presented in the Aachen Museum of Local History until the Nazi era (**fig. 1**)[16]? Should we see it like J. Buchkremer, whose 1925 reconstruction of the inner district of the palace was based on building research, which he also revealed in an idealised plan of the ruins at the time (**figs 2-3**)[17]? Or, should we view it in the light of the already-mentioned models by L. Hugot from 1965 (**fig. 4**) and 1980[18], the drawings of C. E. Koehne (**fig. 5**)[19] or other authors?

Such evidence from Aachen palace research must be dealt with, especially when the question of what an architectural form represents and should express has been addressed in great detail before it was

14 Cf. the influential exhibition of the same name at Villa Hügel, Essen, in 1956 and the no less influential publications in it: Elbern 1956; Böhner/Elbern 1962-1964.

15 Cf. Müller et al. 2013, 98-115; Pohle 2014c, 186-189 cat. nos 219-222. To the model of 1925: Huyskens 1914; 1951; Pick 1920; Oellers 1983. To the model of 1965: Kreusch 1965; Hugot 1965 and with regard to its actualisation in 1980/1981: Hugot/Oellers 1981. To the digital model of the palace: Ristow 2012; 2014.

16 Cf. Pohle 2015b, 394. 422 pl. 2.

17 Cf. Pohle 2015b, 280. 291; Ley 2014.

18 Cf. above, note 15.

19 Cf. Köhne 1989.

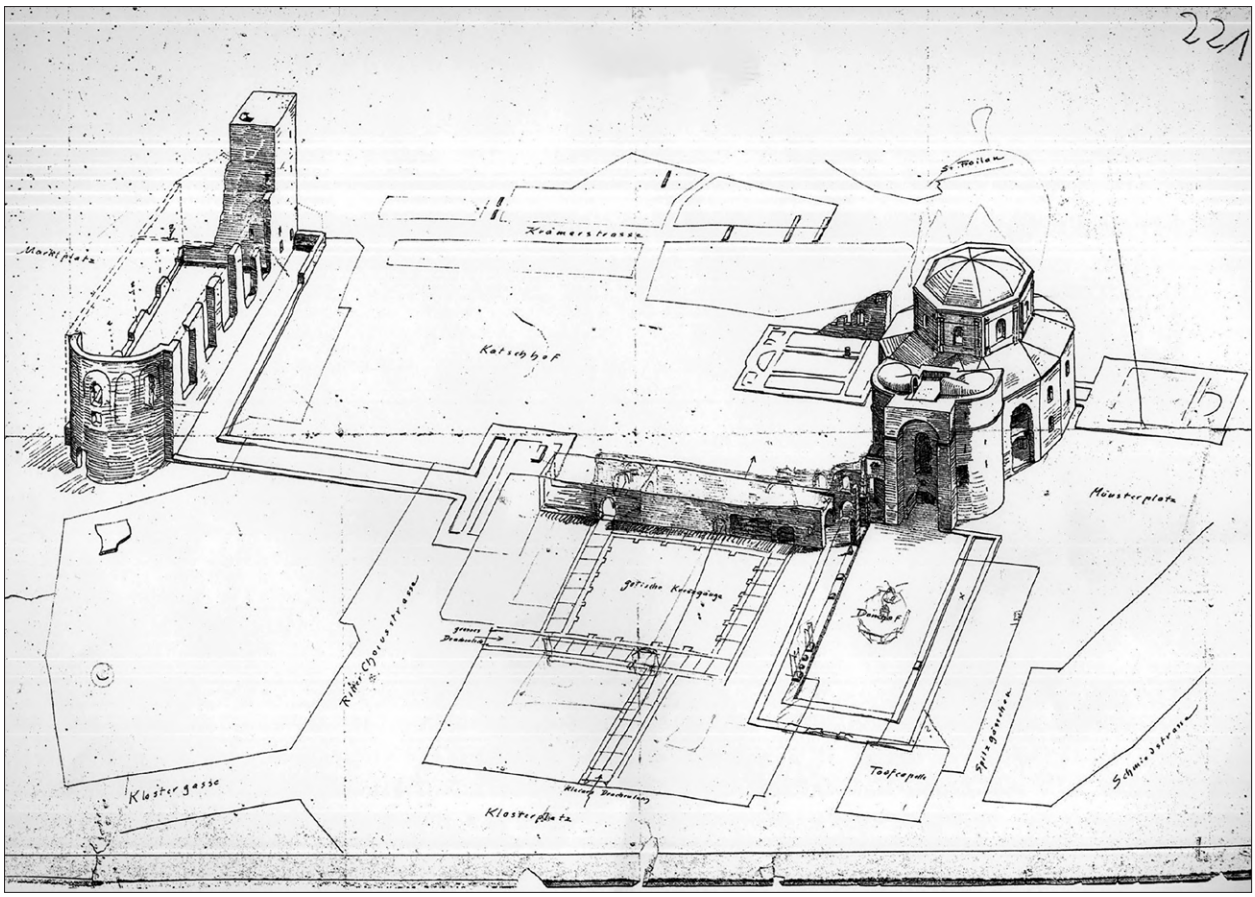

Fig. 2 Drawing of the Carolingian remains in the main buildings of the former palace complex by J. Buchkremer, based on his own research, 1925. Archive of the Dombauleitung Aachen, Pläne L 2–1. – (Photo F. Pohle).

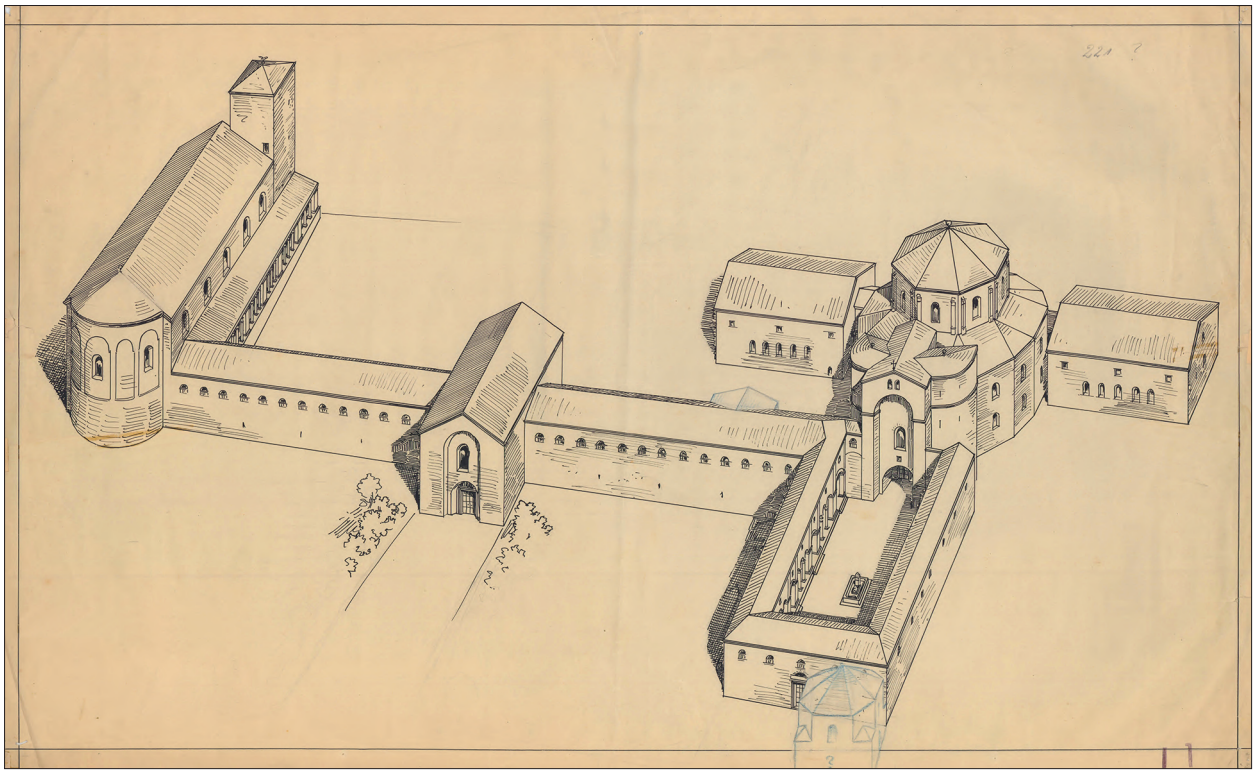

Fig. 3 Reconstruction of the palace complex on the basis of his plan of the remains by J. Buchkremer, 1925. Archive of the Dombauleitung Aachen, Pläne L 1–1. – (Photo F. Pohle).

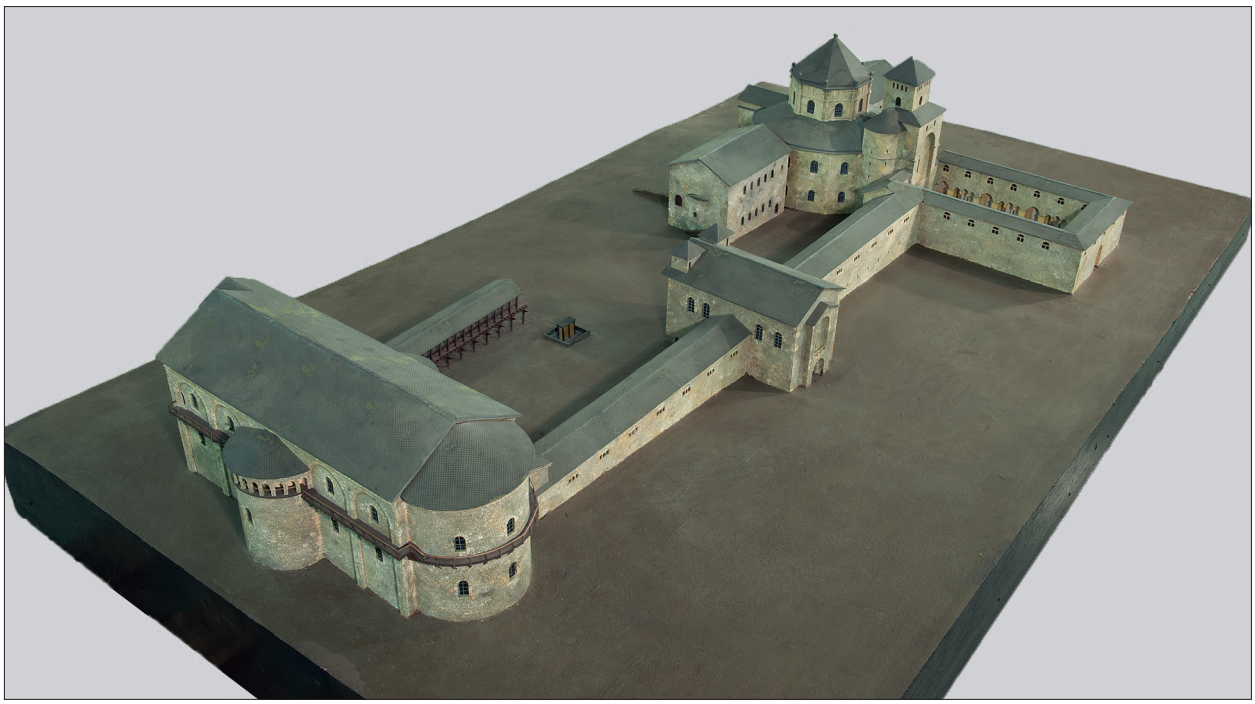

Fig. 4 Reconstruction model of Charlemagne's palace by L. Hugot, 1965. – (Photo Städtische Sammlung Aachen, A. Gold).

clarified what was actually built. The plans of the ruins of what has actually been preserved allow many solutions, depending not least on fundamental decisions as to what a palace of the early Middle Ages actually was (still a late antique palace or already a medieval castle, or just a big farm with a stone house for the king?) and with which mediation interests (consciously or unconsciously) a reconstruction is connected. What is true of the buildings themselves can be seen directly in the models: they are placed at the location and have influenced the view of the monuments, and even the detailed reconstruction of them. In its current appearance, the Aachen palace is a staged monument.

In the late 19th century, buildings were regarded as historical documents, and just as historical charters could be separated from their associated documents in the archival practice of the time simply because of the appreciation of the form and a supposedly higher historical significance and value, so too could the building be detached from its surroundings. It had to be freed from its urban surroundings in the form of drawings and real reconstructions so that it could be seen from all angles as a testimony to history, and so that it could be viewed and appreciated[20]. As was the case with almost all German cathedrals and some town halls, there was also an endeavour at Aachen to peel out, as it were, the Carolingian to Gothic monumental palace buildings from the mass of buildings that had been erected in their shadow over the centuries, or even directly adjoined their walls, in order to make them appear in all their monumental grandeur (which need not always be a real grandeur). A closer look at the two large buildings, the King's Hall (now the town hall) and the Church of St Mary (now the Cathedral) and their immediate surroundings makes this clear.

The Market Square

Aachen's market square, a triangular square greatly enlarged in the 17th century, is dominated by the entrance façade of the town hall. It has undergone radical regotization since 1844: the former baroque façade facing the market square, which in the second quarter of the 18th century replaced the still-medieval style, was completely redesigned in the neo-Gothic style (**figs 6-7**); the evolved room layout, especially

20 Cf. Gurlitt 1908; Boecker 1992, 11; Hanselmann 1996; as example Breuer 1981; Wirtz 2009.

Fig. 5 The palace of Aachen, seen from northeast by C. E. Köhne. – (Illustration C. E. Köhne 1989).

on the upper floor, was dismantled in favour of an ideal original plan, and likewise again, especially on the upper floor, the baroque room decoration was removed[21].

Starting from the town hall façade, the predominant architectural style in the market square was considered to be neo-Gothic with the baroque element kept in constant subordination in height and visual impact to the town hall (**fig. 8**)[22]. While the market square was always to remain in one style, according to the will of all those involved – Gothic and bourgeois, with most of the residential buildings still in the Renaissance and regional Baroque styles – the urbaplanning treatment and staging of the Carolingian palace complex was centred entirely on the Katschhof between the two large buildings of the town hall and the Cathedral, as well as on the Cathedral courtyard (Domhof) immediately to the west and the Cathedral square (Münsterplatz) to the south of the church.

Those squares had only just been designed at the beginning of the 19th century, and since on the one hand they lay in the slipstream of the traffic development of the emerging industrial city of Aachen, and on the other hand the adjacent buildings were almost entirely owned by the city or the chapter of St Mary, there were opportunities for a monument-oriented redesign that worked primarily with the staging device of uncovering.

The Katschhof between the Town Hall and the Cathedral

The Katschhof (**fig. 9**) has played, and still plays, a key role in the staging of the Aachen palace[23]. It is located exactly between the historic town hall with its well-preserved Carolingian masonry and the Cathedral; both buildings can be seen from here, and researchers have attributed a central function to this square within the overall structure of the Carolingian palace complex since the middle of the 19th century.

The common reconstructions of the 19th century assumed that some buildings had been erected here in Carolingian times; those of the 20th century saw a wide, open square enclosed on the narrow sides by the large buildings of St Mary's Church and the King's Hall[24]. A stone corridor (the porticus) runs along the long west side, separating the palace and the vicus, the former Carolingian village, and in the east there is a row of buildings that cannot be reconstructed more precisely, with an open space in between, a »palace courtyard«, which is still considered to be tangible in today's townscape. It is the result of extensive clearance measures for the purpose of staging the architecture to elevate the building into a »Denkmal der deutschen Vorzeit«[25], a »monument of German prehistory«, that is also recognisable as such.

21 Cf. Pick/Laurent 1914; Dünnwald 1974, 23-88; Weinstock 1980/1981; Helg/Linden 2006, esp. 160-195. The baroque design of the town hall cf. esp. Helg 2016.

22 Cf. Tschacher 2010, 313.

23 Cf. fundamentally Linden/Siebigs 1989; Boecker 1990; 1992.

24 Cf. below, at note 32 on the reconstructions by Reber and Stephani and above, at note 15 on the 20th century palace models.

25 With regard to the terminology for the Aachen debate, informative: Aufruf 1849; Bock 1843; Oebecke 1842.

Here, too, let us start from how it appeared in around 1800 (**fig. 10**): The square sloped steeply from north to south and from northwest to southeast, at least more steeply than it does today. On the south side of the town hall was a garden terrace, immediately adjoined to the south by a row of houses. On the west side, there were municipal and monastic buildings without a clear alignment, on the east side was the rear of the Krämerstraße buildings, and in the south, diagonally along the old immunity boundary of the Marienstift, there was a development that still included parts of the northern annex building and, among other things, the »Stiftsrommel«, the brewery of the chapter of St Mary[26]: the imperial city's pillory (Katsch) in the middle of the square had already been cleared away by that time. The square was thus considerably smaller in around 1800 than it is today, and even then it was a quiet, urban space away from the main and shopping streets, which were only busy periodically, due to the adjoining courthouse and the theatre, which was established in one of the buildings in the middle of the 18th century. In the second half of the 19th century, the workshop of the Aachen Cathedral restoration works was housed here for decades (**fig. 11**).

As a first measure, the square was given a new name in 1847: »Chorusplatz«, named after the knight, Gerhard Chorus, who at that time was considered the third founder of Aachen after the mythical Roman Granus and Charlemagne, since it is said that in the years of the 14th century, when he held the office of mayor, the King's Hall was rebuilt into the town hall and the plan for the construction of the Gothic choir of the church of St Mary was worked out, i. e. precisely those buildings that were to be staged by the open square[27]. Between about 1860 and 1890, the buildings to the north and south of the square disappeared (**fig. 12**), and the square now extended up to the large buildings, enclosed by narrow garden areas. The rear façade of the town hall was given a massive staircase in 1853 – not least for structural reasons – which diverted the view from the largely undesigned walls and established a new dominant feature[28]. In the two decades around 1900, the Ritter-Chorus-Straße was laid out as a new western access road, galleries were built in front of the southern façade of the town hall – primarily to improve the optics – and a historicist administration building for the city of Aachen was constructed on the northwestern edge of the square,

Fig. 6 Aachen's market square with the baroque town hall. Steel engraving, H. Winkles, 1840. – (Photo Städtische Sammlung Aachen).

Fig. 7 The façade of Aachen town hall after regotization. Historical photograph, 1925. – (Photo City of Aachen, Stadtarchiv).

Fig. 8 Aachen's market square with the still baroque town hall. Photography, J. Wothly, around 1860. – (Photo City of Aachen, Stadtarchiv).

26 Cf. Boecker 1992, 12.
27 Cf. Birmanns 1913; recently Deloie 2017/2018.
28 Cf. Dünnwald 1974, 23-88.

Fig. 9 The Katschhof. View from the gallery of the Cathedral to the north. – (Photo C. Ludovicus [CC by SA 2.0], 2010).

while the level of the square was straightened by slightly raising it on the southern edge and lowering it by a good one and a half metres in the north[29]. The alignment in the west was moved back to that of the former Carolingian connecting passage between the King's Hall and St Mary's Church, remnants of which are still preserved in the abbey building today, although parts of the preserved substance was removed in favour of new buildings, especially at the northern end of the passage[30]. In the square itself, the traffic area and garden designs competed, a disagreement that was finally resolved in favour of an almost full-surface paving (**figs 13-14**). The long galleries between the Cathedral and the town hall, however, remained unfinished due to the lack of economic usability; the Porticus was not rebuilt[31].

A comparison of the conditions around 1840 and around 1910 alone makes it clear why 19th century research was still so cautious with regard to a wide, even, central »*Pfalzhof*« square: both F. von Reber in 1892 and K. G. Stephani in 1902 assumed smaller courtyards, bordered and interspersed with porticoes and smaller rooms, even an almost complete superstructure[32] – they did not yet know the Katschhof as an open space between the large Carolingian-period buildings. The stylisation of the Katschhof into the central courtyard of Aachen palace, as undertaken by J. Buchkremer in 1925 and above all L. Hugot in 1965, was much easier after its transformation into a »Denkmalplatz«. Instead of relatively inhomogeneous walls around a small, open space of irregular ground plan, a large rectangle had been created on which the large buildings became effective as three-dimensional plastic structures. A stage was created for the archetypal buildings of history, the stage illusion of which eventually had an effect on the reconstructions of the Carolingian situation and can still be experienced today, despite the more subordinate new buildings from the period after the Second World War[33].

Whether the Katschhof was actually the central square of the palace, whether it was one of the important squares, or whether at least parts of the buildings of the palace and/or the village can be imagined here, through which the connecting passage linked the church to the palace area on the Market Hill, must remain open at present[34]. The 19th century assumption that in the pre-Charlemagne period the palace buildings had already been grouped essentially inside the enclosing wall of a late Roman fort around today's market square, and were then extended under Charlemagne by a second group of buildings in the south with St Mary's Church as the focal point, and with the Katschhof as a possible second palace courtyard, was unnecessarily abandoned around 1900[35]. Today, now that the existence and approximate extent of the Roman fort can be regarded as proven by several smaller excavations, we are back at square one. It is now more than probable that older buildings in the fort at the market were still in use under Charlemagne[36].

29 Cf. Pohle 2015b, 37-38; to the construction measures at the town hall also Glander 2007.
30 Cf. Pohle 2015b, 335-338.
31 Cf. however, on corresponding plans Kundolf 2013a.
32 Cf. von Reber1892, 189-249; Stephani 1903.
33 Cf. Tschacher 2010, 342-375.
34 An excavation by the Aachen city archaeology department in 2010 at least proved that a Roman road crossed the area of today's Katschhof until the 14th century, without any kind of square fortification adjoining this road. Cf. Pohle 2015b, 388-389. Were buildings still rising above the foundations and base walls of the proven Roman buildings in Charlemagne's time?
35 Cf. Pohle 2021, 97.
36 Cf. Pohle 2015b, 489; Schaub 2015/2016, 22-27; Kyritz/Schaub 2015.

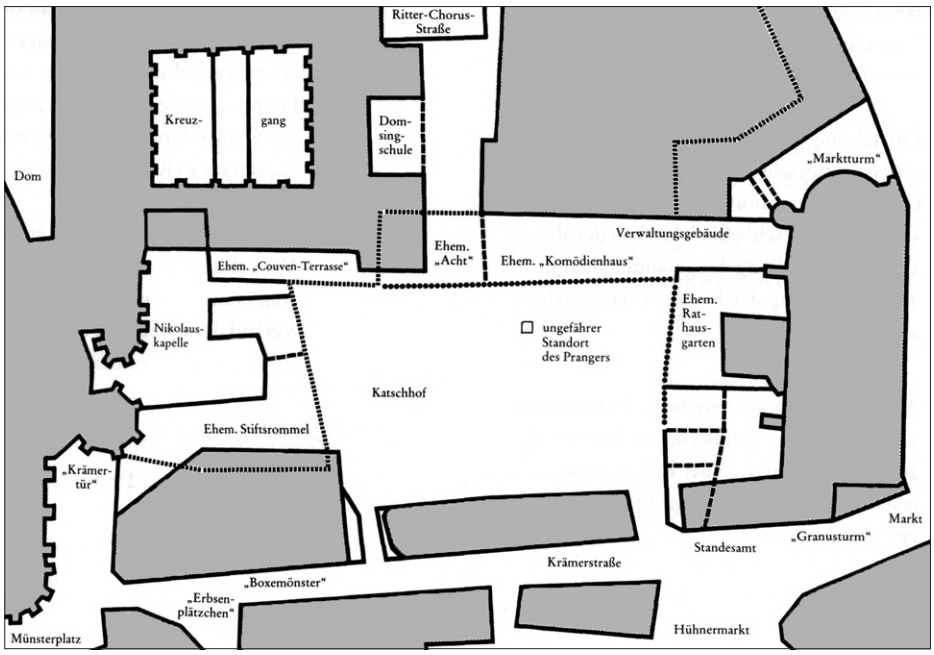

Fig. 10 The Katschhof, old and new building lines. **Dashed line** Exact course unknown. – **Short dashed line** Approximate course of the Cathedral immunity, which largely coincided with building walls. – **Dotted line** Façades of the houses of the »Manderscheider Lehens«. – (Plan City of Aachen, Hochbauamt).

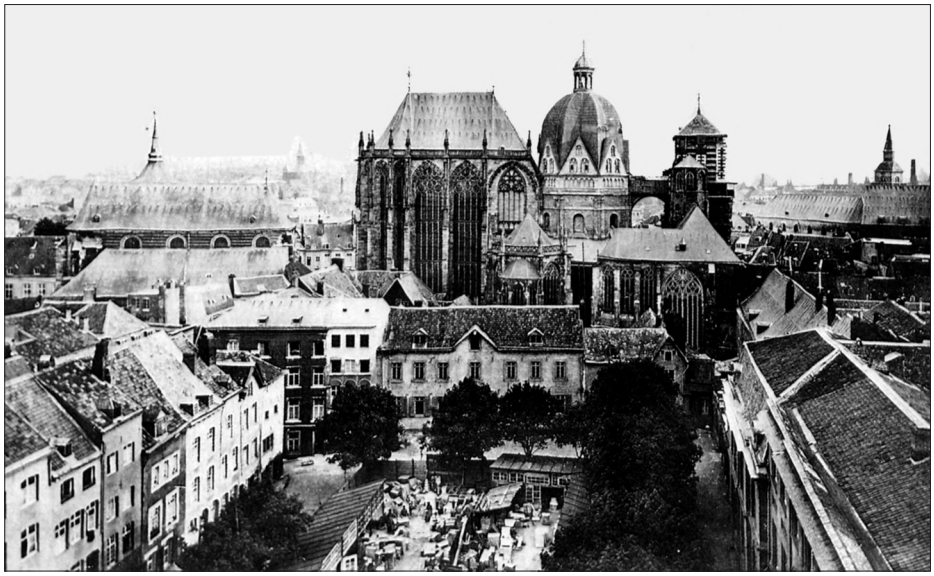

Fig. 11 View across the Katschhof to the Cathedral around 1875. – (Photo City of Aachen, Stadtarchiv)

Fig. 12 View across the Katschhof to the town hall around 1890. – (Photo City of Aachen, Stadtarchiv).

Fig. 13 View across the Katschhof to the Cathedral around 1910. – (Photo Domkapitel Aachen).

Fig. 14 View across the Katschhof to the town hall around 1910. – (Photo City of Aachen, Stadtarchiv, G. Mertens).

The Cathedral Courtyard (Domhof)

In the case of Aachen Cathedral, which was in a desolate state towards the end of French rule on the Rhine (**fig. 15**), the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm IV sparked off a comprehensive renovation in 1840[37]. Ultimately, it amounted to the creation of a historicist new state, which could only be considered to be a reconstruction of an earlier state to a very limited extent and, with the execution of the marble and mosaic decoration in the octagon and hexagon taking place under the reign of Wilhelm II at the latest, it was in no way compatible with contemporary monument conservation in theory and practice[38].

The Cathedral courtyard is situated in front of the church building, which was redesigned in the Wilhelminian style on the inside and has Gothic and Baroque elements on the outside. In this small square, even more so than in the Katschhof, but less pronounced (since its implementation failed), the staging device of a stylistically pure reconstruc-

37 Cf. esp. Belting 1984; Tschacher 2010, 274-283.

38 Cf. Belting 1984; Wehling 1995; Pohle/Konnegen 2005/2006.

Fig. 15 Aachen Minster by J. P. Scheuren, 1825. – (Illustration Städtische Sammlung Aachen, Route Charlemagne).

tion was added, as it corresponded with the focus on monument preservation, especially in the mid-19th century, in the restoration of the large architectural monuments.

Until the beginning of the 19th century, the Cathedral courtyard was legally and structurally closed off from the rest of the city. In 1803, in the course of secularisation in the Rhineland, the special legal status of the immunity district of the chapter of St Mary finally ended. In 1811, the prefect of the Roer Department had the late Gothic gate building that separated the Cathedral courtyard from the fish market demolished, as it was too narrow for his carriage to drive up to the main portal of the church (**fig. 16**). The previously secluded square, which was not much changed by a lattice gate installed a little later, was now visible from afar (**fig. 17**)[39]. The very heterogeneous development of the square from the 17th to the 19th centuries was now much more noticeable. On the south side of the square were buildings that were all built after 1725 – baroque, two-storey residential buildings in a local style and a classical, plastered building whose façade still protrudes diagonally from the building line. At the eastern end of the north side, further buildings of the 18th and early 19th centuries abutted the church while, at the western end of the same, a single-storey building of the early 19th century projected far into the Cathedral courtyard and a small garden interrupted the row. This state of affairs was considered so unsatisfactory by the historically interested circles in Aachen that minor reconstruction measures and archaeological investigations began as early as the 1820s[40]. In 1869, the considerations regarding a redesign of the square were already so far advanced that the French clergymen Surigny and Martin consulted by the dean of the chapter because of their art-historical expertise, dared to present a free reconstruction, showing Gothic forms in detail, as a basis for a redesign (**fig. 18**)[41]: In their design, open atrium halls surrounded the square, in the centre of which a fountain integrating the pine cone and four (!) she-wolves was to stand. Wide balconies above the atrium halls were to be used in the context of the Aachen pilgrimages. In front of the large west conch of St Mary's Church, Surigny and Martin envisaged a fourth atrium wing, and the early Gothic west window was to be opened in such a way that the imperial throne could be viewed from the forecourt. Although it is in no way a historically faithful reconstruction, the watercolour marks an early phase of the debate about the redesign of the atrium, which was strongly linked to the archaeological efforts around this part of the Carolingian palace.

At the end of the 1870s, the Karlsverein-Dombauverein, as the developer of the entire Cathedral restoration, once again considered thoroughly redesigning the Cathedral courtyard and building a new,

39 Cf. Janßen-Schnabel/Nußbaum 1992.
40 Cf. Pohle 2015b, 222; 2021, 98.
41 Cf. Wehling 1995, 68; Pohle 2015b, 223; 2021, 98-99.

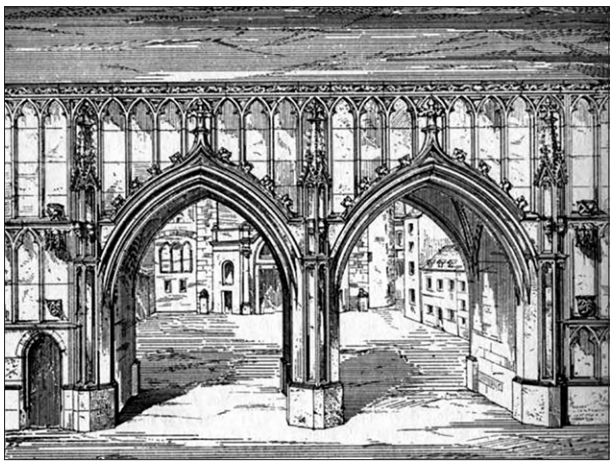

Fig. 16 Entrance gate to the Cathedral courtyard, demolished in 1811, by J. P. Scheuren. Copperplate engraving, detail, 1825. – (Photo Städtische Sammlung Aachen).

Fig. 17 View of the Cathedral courtyard (Domhof) from the west, before 1879. – (Photo Domkapitel Aachen).

Fig. 18 Attempted reconstruction of the Carolingian atrium by Surigny/Martin, 1869. Watercolour drawing. – (Photo Städtische Sammlung Aachen).

historicised atrium in uniform architectural forms that incorporated as many Carolingian elements as possible. In 1885, he announced a competition, from which the office of F. K. Ewerbeck emerged as the winner (**fig. 19**)[42]. A tall fountain column, crowned by St George on horseback, was planned for the centre of the square to visually mediate between the rather flat atrium and the towering west building. However, the design – which was not intended to be a historically accurate reconstruction but (like all the other competition designs) a new staging design – was not implemented because the Karlsverein, the chapter of St Mary and the city of Aachen could not agree on the distribution of the costs; other building measures seemed more urgent, as some of the houses that would have had to be demolished were not owned by the church and the chapter was not prepared to forego the rental income[43].

In the spring of 1897, the Karlsverein had parts of the north side of the Cathedral courtyard exposed in connection with repair work, where a thick wall plaster had greatly obscured the situation. After its removal and the demolition of some pre-wall pillars, architectural structures came to light that must have been of Carolingian origin, but of whose existence on such a large scale nothing had been known until then. Based on an initial examination of the remains above ground in the northeast corner of the Cathedral courtyard, the Karlsverein then commissioned the Aachen architect P. Peters to redesign the façade in such a way that the forms of the Carolingian atrium would become clear again. In the process, parts of the Carolingian building were demolished and all the pillar bases and impost capitals on the façade side were renewed, without strictly following the findings (**fig. 20**)[44]. Since the provin-

42 Cf. Ewerbeck 1896; Kundolf 2013b ; Pohle 2015b, 99-100.
43 Cf. Pohle 2015b, 227; 2021, 100.
44 Cf. Pohle 2015b, 228-234; 2021, 101-102.

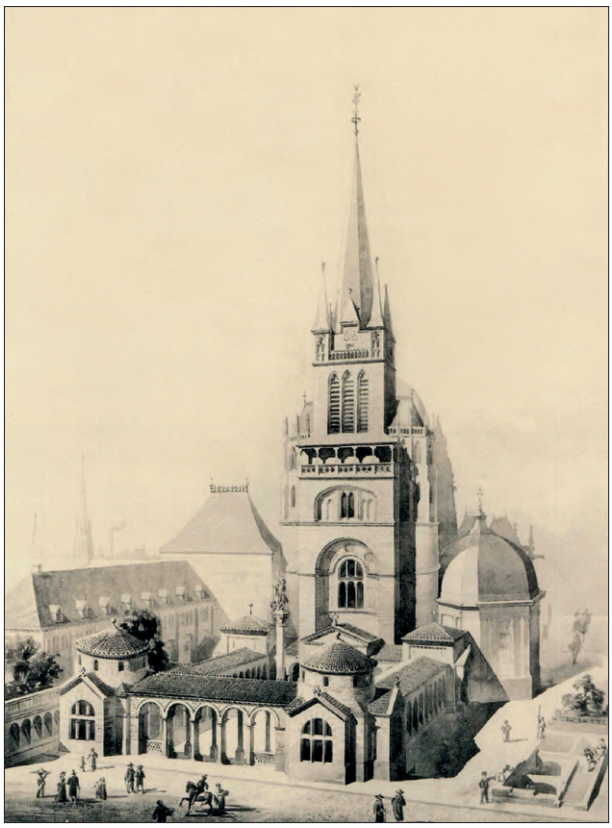

Fig. 19 Competition design for the new construction of the atrium on the west side of Aachen Cathedral by F. C. Ewerbeck, 1885. – (Dombauleitung Aachen; photo F. Pohle).

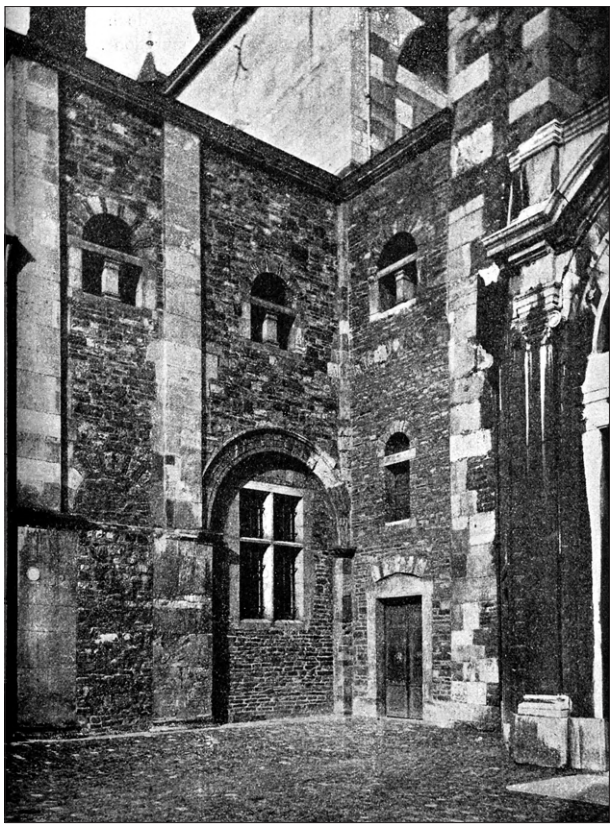

Fig. 20 Partially reconstructed atrium in the north-east corner of the Cathedral courtyard, c. 1898. – (Photo Dombauleitung Aachen).

cial conservator, P. Clemen, the leading monument conservator in the Rhineland, strongly opposed the measure, considering it to be a misguided reconstruction and even demanded its complete dismantling, the Karlsverein tried to save what could be saved through in-depth investigations. It entrusted these investigations to the architect and city councillor K. Schmitz and the later Cathedral architect J. Buchkremer; an initial reconstruction proposal by Schmitz did not meet with Buchkremer's approval, so in 1898 he published his well-known reconstruction of the atrium and gave detailed reasons for it (**fig. 21**)[45]. The section of the atrium reconstruction by P. Peters in the north-east corner, which had already been completed, was slightly adapted, but further construction was abandoned. It failed due to finances, and the requirements of the chapter of the collegiate church and later the Cathedral, as well as the objections of the state preservation authorities, for whom a complete reconstruction of the Carolingian atrium was already out of the question after 1900[46].

45 Cf. Schmitz 1898; Buchkremer 1898a; 1898b.

46 Cathedral master builder J. Buchkremer nevertheless drew ideal views of »his« atrium again and again until his death in 1946, which were considered for implementation once more after the destruction of the Second World War. Cf. Schüller 1946. However, the *status quo* was restored.

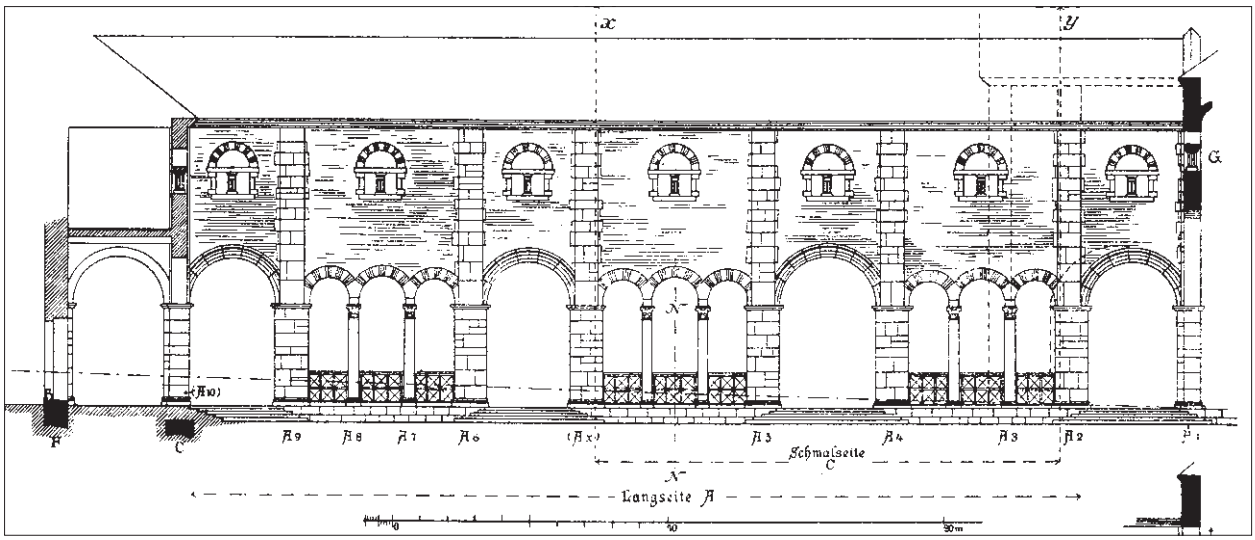

Fig. 21 Reconstruction of the Carolingian atrium by J. Buchkremer, 1898 (»Schmalseite«: narrow side, »Langseite«: long side). – (Drawing cf. Buchkremer 1898b, fig. 3).

Conclusion

When we look at the Carolingian palace of Aachen, we are dealing – and this cannot be emphasised often enough – with staged monuments. They by no means speak directly to us – as the theory of monument preservation around 1900 presupposed – but in many voices, even dissonantly between original substance, reconstruction, illustration and interpretation; topos and popular opinion can often also be heard in the overtones. Monuments are not only testimonies of their own time and of the times that have tinkered with them, rebuilt them or added to them, but also of the times that have rendered outstanding services to their development and communication. How much development and didacticism can a monument, especially a World Heritage site like Aachen Cathedral, tolerate in order to still speak to us »unaltered« as a testimony to a bygone era? Can the theory of the monument as an unadulterated testimony to a bygone era be maintained at all, especially under the pressure of tourist marketing? In addition, Aachen's World Heritage status inevitably perpetuates the current structure of the city centre with its deliberately designed squares that are linked back to the Cathedral and city hall and to contemporary interpretations[47], so any attempt to revise the image created up to now must fail – or take place in other media: on paper, in a model or in a temporary light spectacle, all the way to an »augmented reality« that superimposes our current idea of the shape of what once was on the rough remains and reveals itself for what it is: a vision[48].

47 Cf. Meyer 2009; Janßen-Schnabel 2011; Pohle 2021, 106-109.

48 Cf. Pohle 2021, 109.

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