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The roots of contemporary European identity: Carolingian and Arthurian references in the postmedieval *acquis mythologique*

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Abstract
This article's research subject is Europeanisation analysed through the lens of Carolingian and Arthurian references in the postmedieval *acquis mythologique*. Focusing on the integration process, the author examines the prominence of Carolingian mythology and the absence of Arthurian imagery in European identity formation. Analysing the use of Carolingian and Arthurian references in the early days of the EU and during its expansion, the study explores the dichotomy between these two symbolic cultures.
The author verifies a hypothesis that political communication concerning the integration process and European identity formation is based on values and symbols which refer to Charlemagne, but cultural communication resonates with King Arthur, forming an intricate *acquis mythologique communautaire*. This study explores early post-war Carolingian references in Western Europe (1949–1952) and subsequent appropriations in Eastern Europe (2000–2009). Whether supportive or critical, these references permanently link the idea of European unity to Charlemagne, creating a discourse where even critics tacitly accept the validity of this connection. The absence of King Arthur in the EU integration discourse prompts a call for further exploration. The author suggests that Arthurian imagery could provide a unique analytical perspective and contribute to the further deep analysis of the evolving European identity.
Keywords: European identity, Carolingian mythology, Arthurian imagery, EU integration, acquis mythologique, Charlemagne, cultural communication, political communication

Geneza współczesnej tożsamości europejskiej: odniesienia karolińskie i arturiańskie w post-średniowiecznym *acquis mythologique*

Streszczenie

Przedmiotem analizy w niniejszym artykule jest poszukiwanie odniesień karolińskich i arturiańskich w post-średniowiecznym *acquis mythologique*. Skupiając się na procesie integracji, autor bada znaczenie mitologii karolińskiej i brak wyobrażeń arturiańskich w kształtowaniu się tożsamości europejskiej. Analizując sposób wykorzystania odniesień karolińskich i arturiańskich w początkach Unii Europejskiej oraz w okresie jej ekspansji, w badaniu zgłębiono dychotomię pomiędzy obiema kulturami symbolicznymi. Autor weryfikuje hipotezę, że komunikacja polityczna dotycząca procesu integracji europejskiej i budowania tożsamości europejskiej opiera się na wartościach i symbolice związanej z Karolem Wielkim. Natomiast komunikacja kulturowa rezonuje z królem Arturem, tworząc skomplikowany zasób *acquis mythologique communautaire*. W niniejszym badaniu przeanalizowano wczesne powojenne odniesienia do Karolingów w Europie Zachodniej (1949–1952) i późniejsze zawłaszczenia w Europie Wschodniej (2000–2009). Niezależnie od tego, czy odniesienia te są pozytywne, czy krytyczne, trwale łączą one ideę jedności europejskiej z Karolem Wielkim. Autor konstatuje, że wytworzył się dyskurs, w którym nawet krytycy milcząco akceptują ważność tej korelacji. Nieobecność króla Artura w dyskursie integracyjnym UE skłania do zainicjowania dalszych badań. Wyobrażenia arturiańskie mogą zapewnić wyjątkową perspektywę analityczną i stanowić wkład do dalszej pogłębionej analizy kształtowania się tożsamości europejskiej.

Słowa kluczowe: tożsamość europejska, mitologia karolińska, wyobrażenia arturiańskie, integracja europejska, *acquis mythologique,* Karol Wielki, komunikacja kulturowa, komunikacja polityczna

1. Introduction

The main aim of the article is to examine references to Carolingian and Arthurian mythology in the context of European integration. The article is focused on understanding why the myth of Charlemagne is present in the political discourse of the European Union (EU), while the myth of King Arthur is not. The references to Charlemagne, both positive and critical, permanently link the idea of European unity to this figure. The political and symbolic discourse of the EU is dominated by the figure of Charlemagne, who is presented as the forerunner of a united Europe. References to Charlemagne appear in various forms, such as building names, awards and political speeches. The EU's official integration discourse lacks references to King Arthur, despite the fact that he is a culturally significant figure in Europe. The article suggests that Arthurian motifs can bring a unique perspective to the formation of European identity. I re-introduce the concept of *acquis mythologique communautaire*, which refers to the shared imaginations, myths and memories that precede official documents and legal norms (*acquis communautaire* and *acquis historique communautaire*). The article argues that both Carolingian and Arthurian myths are elements of this resource.

There exists a dichotomy between Charlemagne, who is presented as a symbol of unity through integration, and King Arthur, who is seen as a symbol of mission and conquest. This dichotomy helps to understand why one myth has gained popularity in

the context of European integration and the other has not. The purpose of the article, its theoretical and methodological frameworks, and the content of the article all relate to the prominent presence of Carolingian mythology and the absence of Arthurian imagery in the European integration process. The nature of the stark opposition between history and myth is deeply problematic in postmedieval reception. This article is the intervention, which warrants the topic of medievalism in the context of European integration. It provides a useful overview of some of the ways, in which the legend of Charlemagne has been used in the discourse around the EU, not only on the pro-EU side but also on the anti-EU side, showing a common cultural reference point even for those with opposing beliefs. The publication focuses on international politics. The examples are carefully selected from critical moments in this discourse, in particular from the early days of what was to become the EU in the 1940s and 1950s and from the period of EU expansion in the first decade of the 21st century. Even if the article does not fully engage in a genuine dialogue with contemporary medievalism studies, it will be of interest not only to those who follow the cultural and political development of the EU, but also to those who study the contemporary reception of medievalism. Both are important current topics in their disciplines. Thus, the results of this work are appropriate for both the scholars focused on foreign affairs or studying modern politics and the studies in medievalism.

The voice asking for deeper and less superficial EU political communication has been heard for some time (Toczyski 2021). I will briefly discuss the purpose of this text: what I want to achieve and how I intend to do it. I build on the intellectual offer of French political scientist Fabrice Larat, Swedish sociologist Kristian Gerner and Italian historian of the Middle Ages Tommaso di Carpegna Falconieri. Fabrice Larat's argument frames the discussion by linking the past to a then future-oriented political project, adding historical depth to European integration. Western Europe needed this deepening after World War II, in the time of creating supranational institutions, which aimed beyond the limits of the national institutions. His idea of extending the EU-related term *acquis communautaire* to *acquis historique communautaire* led me to its further extension as *acquis mythologique communautaire*.

This is also the place to introduce the works of Gerner, focused on the dichotomy between postmedieval King Arthur and Charlemagne as two European legendary characters, and Falconieri focused on contemporary Europeanisation and medievalism, on which later arguments rely. The current research question is: How might medievalism be deployed in EU politics? In such a context the Carolingian myth can be fruitfully analysed in comparison with the Arthurian myth. Their Western European medieval origin and knightly content surrounding the main character of the king suggest that they are two sides of the same imaginative phenomenon. Can both the Carolingian and Arthurian elements of symbolic culture co-exist within one imaginary resource – *acquis mythologique communautaire* – which through the shared framework of mythological references mobilises common identity? Problems of mythologies are visible in European and EU studies (Kølvraa 2016), usually not centering and not sufficiently elaborating the concepts such as *acquis mythologique communautaire*.

The use of Carolingian and Arthurian references in the post-war European integration process is an interesting and relevant topic. Particularly the use of Carolingian references in Eastern Europe (in relation to the extension of the European Union) has not received much attention in scholarly literature.

2. *Acquis mythologique communautaire*

Advocates of Western European political integration after World War II sought to mobilise pan-European support for their cause and reworked a series of traditional European narratives to do so. The scholar of European studies Richard McMahon mentions three conservative narratives of Christian Europe, in which he includes a traditional concept of Europe traced by twentieth-century historians like Henri Pirenne and Alfred Toynbee "from the medieval Rhineland core of Western Christendom," which was followed by early European federalists' appeal to "these common Rheinish roots and the symbolism of Charlemagne," and by the "echoes of medieval Christendom in the geography of the early European Economic Community (EEC)." These narratives "have long competed with representations of a liberal modern West, infusing east-west civilisational discourse with ideological tension" (McMahon 2017: p. 315–316). According to Philippe Perchoc, among the co-existent "soft elements of the European narrative" are "pre-EU figures, the founding fathers and cold war symbolism and events." (Perchoc 2017: p. 369).[1]

From the medieval(ism) studies perspective, the most intriguing element in the above list seems to be the Carolingian reference. And indeed, the figure of Charlemagne had more connections to the emerging supranational European political institutions through the physical elements such as statues and names of buildings. One such example is a Brussels building named the Charlemagne, used in 1967 as part of the Léopold quarter since 1958 pointed to house the European Communities and developed by private companies. Pre-EU historical heritage such as Charlemagne or European mythology has been merged with the pre-existing Belgian heritage, whereas the European Commission's Charlemagne building is based on the figure of the Carolingian emperor that was in vogue in the 1950s (Larat 2006; Perchoc 2017). The post-war history of referring to Charlemagne as a symbol of united Europe is longer than the naming of European institutions building in Brussels.

Helpful in clarifying the research question and demarcating the scope of this study will be two notions formed by analogy to the EU law named *acquis communautaire*.

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[1] As he writes, "the first figures used in the European narrative were distant figures and historical events" adapted by European institutions as the elements of the European narrative and historiography: "... invoking more distant figures in the post-war years such as Charlemagne and turning to recent history only when the topic became less sensitive in some member states, such as Germany and Italy. Charlemagne's figure was widely used in the 1950s (Larat 2006), because his empire encompassed the member states of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). The so-called 'founding fathers' of European integration are celebrated by the European institutions [...]. Many European programmes bear the names of either pre-EU figures (Erasmus, Comenius, Corvinus, Marie Curie) or founding fathers, for example the Schuman programme for interns at the European Parliament (EP) or the European Commission Jean Monnet programme for European studies" (Perchoc 2017: p. 369).

Fabrice Larat explains references to Charlemagne in a similar manner to the heuristics of naming the building. Among the consequences of referring to Charles the Great, the deepening of the sense of cross-border pan-continental Western European community is the main reason. The instrumentalisation of Charlemagne, a historical figure, fulfils "function for a time" by "linking the past to a future-oriented political project" and giving "European integration the historical depth that Western Europe needed after the war, when it was a matter of creating supranational institutions to go beyond the limits of the national framework that had prevailed until then" (Larat 2006: p. 65). Instrumentalisation makes it possible to bring out the common denominator in national memories. It even shows the importance of such denominators for the future of Europe. But it does not lead to a shared sense of belonging. Collective identity cannot be decreed. Referring to a hypothetical patron figure, a titular and tutelary figure, is not the same as creating an awareness of a shared history, says Larat in his works (see: Larat 2005, 2006).

The above-mentioned proposal of the European Union's historical foundations is expressed as the so-called *acquis historique communautaire*, consisting of excerpts of normative acts ruling European supranational polity. Accumulated Preambles of EU legal acts constitute and codify beliefs about the historical purpose of the EU. Moral commitment resulting from Europe's past (*historique*) and the legal character (*acquis communautaire*) of the treaties are two factors of an *acquis historique communautaire*. The principles present no juridical value, but their moral aspect builds the atmosphere, in which the new EU countries must accept the *acquis historique* at the moment of joining the EU. The common identity of the EU results from *acquis historique*. Some discourses define Europe divisions as unnatural or even abnormal and emphasise moral and historical legitimacy of the quest for unity: the unity in the diversity results in "belief that all the attempts to restore the unity of Europe since Charlemagne have sought to recollect what, in fact, belongs together" (Larat 2005). The concept does not cover other than legal expressions of European integration, such as the artistic, journalistic or even political, which did not enter into the preambles.

On this ground, another concept may be built. The debate about cultural Europeanisation may be retold in the words of Denis de Rougemont, who wrote that Europe would be an energy, which we denote by E, and which is equal to the product of its mass (surface area, raw materials, population), denoted by m, and its culture, whose effects and consequences grow at a geometric rate, which will be denoted by c squared. The famous equation: $E = mc^2$ would be read as follows: Europe = the peninsula of Asia multiplied by the intensity of culture. Departing from de Rougemont, we may assume that supranational legal and institutional response is an epiphenomenon of the European identity, which was built more on cultural grounds than on political negotiation of normative acts. Following this we may go even one step further from Larat's idea and introduce the concept of *acquis mythologique communautaire*. It would refer to common imaginations, myths and memories preceding the *acquis historique communautaire*. Analogously to pan-European processes of law-making (the *acquis communautaire*) and history-writing (resulting in *acquis historique communautaire*) the *acquis mythologique*

communautaire has been formed. Is it a must to adhere to the latter? We know that during Poland's transition from communism in 1989 to EU accession in 2004, "myths such as Arthurianism re-emerged to become a mode of debating about who won the moral argument" (Toczyski 2018).

As there is no clear space for Charlemagne nor other mytho-mnemonic persons in *acquis historique communautaire*, but we know that such figures exist in semi-official discourses related to the European Union, I suggest introducing one more category: *acquis mythologique communautaire*. It would have no legal counterpart, but would be expressed in some imaginative, artistic, journalistic and other public expressions of European phenomena such as medievalism. It was observable in mythologies such as King Arthur's legend in the Central European political breakthrough of 1989. Can both the Carolingian and Arthurian elements of symbolic culture co-exist within one imaginary resource – *acquis mythologique communautaire* – which through the shared framework of mythological references mobilises common identity? It seems that they do co-exist as two sides of the same coin. Political communication refers to Charlemagne, whereas cultural communication refers to King Arthur. They both belong to the *acquis mythologique communautaire* category.

In the current study the space of *acquis mythologique* is explored and analysed, situated closer to political culture than legal documents. It also includes journalistic and artistic communication.

3. Carolingian–Arthurian dichotomy

One of the paths to such a conceptual category led me through the works of Kristian Gerner, a Swedish professor of Eastern European history and culture, who sees parallels between early medieval Carolingian Europe and the twentieth-century European integration project. Gerner suggests that the significant commencement of the medieval unifying endeavour occurred with Charlemagne's coronation as Augustus Imperator in Rome on Christmas Day in the year 800, evolving into a different phase marked by the first crusade in 1095–1096. Similarly, the substantial initiation of the modern unifying project is attributed to the Treaty of Rome in 1957, with its transformative shift paralleling the fall of socialist regimes in Central Europe in 1989. The 8th-century Frankland of Pippin the Small served as the starting point for Charlemagne's project, while the late 1940s and early 1950s of Monnet's and Schuman's France formed the backdrop for the EU project. Both projects originated in the Rhine valley, expanding south and north before turning east. Territories like Bohemia, parts of future Hungary, Saxony, and present-day Slovenia were part of Charlemagne's empire and, after a twelve-hundred-year interval, re-emerged in the EU enlargement process post-1989. In contrast, contemporary Poland and the Baltic states represent new additions, despite their historical involvement in the expansionism of the Holy Roman Empire succeeding the Carolingian Empire. The British Isles and Scandinavia, outside the medieval empire, have remained relatively detached within the EU. He also quotes an early 1998 edition

of *The Economist,* where this type of reference to such structural similarity between the Carolingian empire and the EU was made.

Gerner's original observation was that "the medieval project of European unification and expansion can be associated with the mythological figures of Charlemagne and King Arthur" (Gerner 1999: p. 43). Among the medieval impact on contemporary culture, this author distinguishes two visions, which he calls Arthurian and Carolingian, representing "unity through aggression and war" in the case of King Arthur and "unity through integration by peaceful means" in the case of Charles the Great. Both characters are then for Gerner an embodiment of cognitive categories, through which he chooses to see political and cultural reality (Gerner 1999: p. 39–43). Those categories are also applied by other authors of the same volume (cf. Marácz 1999). Gerner knows that it is hard to expect direct references to these characters, but he is persuaded of their importance. The Arthurian metaphor especially is new for the European integration subject and could rarely be found in any official speech or press article.[2]

It is then not a connection between Arthurianism and Europeanisation, but a set of two other links leading to such a connection. The first is the medieval coexistence of Arthurian and Carolingian mythology (noticed even by medieval authors, for example the famous set of Nine Worthies, where both characters stand next each other, or Jean Bodin's categorisation of all legendary narratives into one ancient Greek-Roman "Matter of Rome" and the two medieval: Arthurian "Matter of Britain" and Carolingian "Matter of France"). This is probably why, according to Gerner, "the ideological and political impact of Charlemagne and Arthur is linked not to factual history but to mythologization. In this capacity they are equally real. Hence Charlemagne may serve to symbolize expansion and integration, whereas Arthur symbolizes mission and conquest and, through the infusion of the legend of the Holy Grail and of the figure of Perceval in the cycle, ultimately, the crusading spirit" (Gerner 1999: p. 44).

Gerner is far from idealising Charlemagne, mentioning that "as a historical actor, Charlemagne certainly was a warrior, and a ruthless one" (Gerner 1999: p. 44). However, the Arthurian legend was embodied in "martial romanticism of chivalry and adventure in the era of the crusades," which Gerner agrees with Dominique Boutet that "in Arthur's kingdom peace is only a parenthesis" (Gerner 1999: p. 45). As Gerner writes, for Charlemagne "the mythological connotation is law and learning, order, civilization and security within recognised frontiers, marken (marches)" because while Charlemagne is depicted as a warrior and conqueror in 13th-century *chansons de geste*, his knights, in contrast, show a disinterest in warfare. Instead, they favour the tranquillity of country life and seek

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[2] Gerner explains it the following way: "The EU as an actor is an abstraction and in spite of the use of mythological paraphernalia, nobody would consciously use the myths of Charlemagne and King Arthur as guides for action. Their importance lies in the fact that they colour perceptions and give a sense of meaning or even of destiny" (Gerner 1999: p. 61). Charlemagne "was a real historical actor, who was subsequently mythologized, whereas the latter [King Arthur] first emerged as a mythical hero in legends and tales, only subsequently to be traced back to a presumed Celtic king of early medieval Britain. In his introduction to *Einhard and Notker the Stammerer: Two Lives of Charlemagne*, Lewis Thorpe is keen to make this distinction between the two heroes, lest also Charlemagne too should be relegated to the mythical sphere" (Gerner 1999: p. 43).

to amass wealth through agriculture rather than relying on plunder. This is why the Charlemagne and the Arthurian romances – which, as Gerner reminds, have the same cultural roots and were sometimes blended – "taken together, they can be said to represent the Janus face of medieval European civilisation's manner of expansion. On the one hand, we find state building, law making, commerce, incorporation and integration, and on the other hand, warfare, mission, conquest and sacrifice" (Gerner 1999: p. 45).

The Carolingian and Arthurian metaphorical model usages can then be seen as an indicator of how Europe is imagined. Whereas "the Arthurian quest for pureness in the name of blood" is not visible in the European integration context, "the Carolingian strife for integration" is a constant element of the official integration discourse. For both metaphors, however, "the notion that Western Europe is at the centre and Eastern Europe is the object of either conquest and integration and then conquest and subjugation" is common. Gerner writes that "unity through aggression and war," and "unity through integration by peaceful means" are two ways, in which Western European civilisation encounters the rest of the world, especially the Eastern part of the continent. Medieval metaphors are, according to him, especially usable in relation to European integration because of the identification with the idea of a universal mission: "Medieval Christianity [...] can serve as a metaphor for contemporary Europeanness" (Gerner 1999: p. 41).

Gerner's observations are at the same time both insightful and oversimplifying. He is probably the first to define the Arthurian-Carolingian dichotomy and its meaning for the European Union. The Carolingian and the Arthurian myths compete in the European imagination, or maybe even in what C. G. Jung, the Swiss founder of analytical psychology, called the collective unconscious (Jung 1969). At the same time Caroliniana and Arthuriana, although dichotomic, are complementary. However, contrary to Gerner's conclusions, Arthurianism does not have to be seen as a mytho-mnemonic complex focused on war and aggression. There is much more in Arthuriana. I argue that compared to Caroliniana it can be seen as an equally peaceful message from our ancestors.

According to Gerner's late-twentieth-century observations and comparisons, contemporary interest in the Middle Ages is more widely spread than it was in previous centuries. We need to add that this interest is the expression of medievalism, as it is focused on contemporary images of the Middle Ages and not on the Middle Ages as such (with a side note that this simplification is useful for the purpose of the current study, and certainly the context of the long history of critical thinking about medievalism may be indicated here). Therefore, is this medievalism nationalist or is it cosmopolitan? Gerner writes: "Romanticism supplies the imagery of contemporary medievalism." He mentions medieval festivals, which are not nationalist but localist and European at the same time, and connote regional rather than ethnic identity. The motivation behind them is "not an expression of Nordic narcissism, but of the wish to emerge as a strong and old component of the European Union," the author asserts. While quoting a Swedish journalistic text published in 1997, which notes of medievalism that its "historical role-playing has a system of rules that creates security" and that "interest in the Middle Ages was a kind of harmful escapism," Gerner asserts that medieval items are both exotic and

close for contemporary people (Gerner 1999: p. 39–40). Undoubtedly, the medievalism described by Gerner is also expressed in the European political project and its collage of myths and symbols constituting *acquis mythologique communautaire*.

4. European medievalism[3]

The analysis of Carolingian imagery in contemporary European integration begins with an attempt at answering the question: How might medievalism be deployed in contemporary EU-level discourse and politics? According to Tommaso di Carpegna Falconieri, a period acknowledged as foundational in European history, spanning from the Romantic Era onwards, is universally recognised by nearly all European nations. Consequently, it should be feasible to identify within this era certain fundamental traits of a shared European society, potentially involving an exploration of the common origins of a contemporary European identity (di Carpegna Falconieri 2019).[4]

The value of Charlemagne for the modern or postmodern European integration process is symbolic, but historically he actually did attempt to integrate Europeans. According to di Carpegna Falconieri, the initial medieval emblem representing the European Union is Charlemagne. References to the ancient sovereign in his capacity as a founding figure emerge as soon as Charlemagne establishes the credentials qualifying him to be acknowledged as one of the progenitors of Europe – an undeniable historical reality. Indeed, contemporaneous sources referred to him as Pater Europae, meaning "Father of Europe", underscoring the undeniable connection. It is evident that the Carolingian Empire, despite debates about its duration, idealism, and fragility, served as an institution that, in the pursuit of unity, substantially transformed societies that were in the nascent stages of European development for centuries. The Carolingian Empire was a political en-

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3 A substantial portion of the analysis constitutes a revised and expanded iteration of the presentation delivered at the 44th International Congress on Medieval Studies in Kalamazoo in 2009. This presentation, titled *Carolingian References in the Europeanization Process*, was presented within the session *What, in the World, is Medievalism?*, sponsored by the International Society for the Study of Medievalism and chaired by Richard Utz (Toczyski 2009). The presentation, funded with the Otto Gründler Travel Award, attracted the attention of Italian scholar Tommaso di Carpegna Falconieri, who attended the session. Subsequently, he referenced the working paper in his 2011 publication *Medioevo Militante*, giving due acknowledgment to both the paper and some of the sources researched (di Carpegna Falconieri 2011). In turn, this section extends gratitude for di Carpegna Falconieri's noteworthy contribution to the field, particularly in his *Medioevo Militante* chapter on medievalism and European integration, which represents a further development of the ideas we had the privilege to exchange. Hereby his recent English-language extended version of the book titled *Militant Middle Ages*, wherein he explores the Middle Ages as a pivotal era in the context of contemporary discourse, will be referenced.

4 The question asked by Falconieri is fundamental for understanding Europe's cultural and political space: "But in which cultural legacy should Europeans recognise themselves? The possibilities are, naturally, endless. For example, the founding role of the Romans has been highlighted, or vice-versa, as we have seen, that of the Celts and the Arthurian myth, or else that of philosophy in general and above all the Enlightenment, or better yet the Law, whether "common law" or Roman codes. Even Romanticism, despite being the architect of nationalisms, is assigned a relevant role in the construction of European identity: one need only recall Guizot, the author of *The History of Civilization in Europe*. The Brothers Grimm themselves, aside from being fathers of the German nation, can be considered among the earliest unifiers of Europe. The desire to affirm common, Christian roots is the one that has provoked the most heated political debate in the present day" (di Carpegna Falconieri 2019: p. 198).

tity that was authentically European, with its focal point not situated in the Mediterranean region, which had evolved into a border and interface with the Islamic world, but rather in continental Europe. In the present context, the ideal of the medieval empire aligned precisely with the potential construction of European consciousness. This involves synthesising diverse populations that, while acknowledging their distinct characteristics and identities, converge on the recognition of a superior organising principle.

Therefore, the legacy of Charlemagne has to be treated more precisely than vague general reference to the mythical. In Falconieri's words: "We are not European because Charlemagne existed, but also because Charlemagne existed," whereas "the Carolingian Era functions so effectively as a precedent and exemplum," and "the history of united Europe may lend itself to improper uses, the simplest of which [...] is that of recourse to a mythical and golden age as an expedient to silence the more recent – insidious and cruel – past" (di Carpegna Falconieri 2019: p. 204).

As Falconieri noted, the English do not find much relevance in Charlemagne, except perhaps to reaffirm their belief that this Europe is essentially a fragile agreement orchestrated by the Paris-Berlin axis. This perception may not be unwarranted, given historical instances such as a Vichy France volunteer unit seamlessly integrating into the Waffen SS during the Second World War and naming itself the Charlemagne Division. Additionally, in the 1960s, Charles de Gaulle actively worked on shaping the concept of a 'Carolingian Europe,' in contrast to an 'Atlantic Europe' (di Carpegna Falconieri 2019).

5. Methodology of the research

The article analyses the roots of contemporary European identity, examining references to Carolingian and Arthurian mythology in the context of European integration. The research methods are diverse and include discourse analysis, mythology comparison, historical analysis, examination of the new concept *acquis mythologique communautaire* and literature analysis. They allow for a comprehensive understanding of the role of Carolingian and Arthurian myths in the context of European integration. The topic is worthwhile and timely, even if some very interesting source materials are old. The work refers to seven postmedieval references. The notion *postmedieval* does not help much in terms of demarcating the scope of the research, because that refers to a 500-year period. While citing the arguments of other scholars, my own clear intervention draws upon three Carolingian references from the origins of the EU and four from the period of EU expansion. This parallel deserves to be signposted as early as here and will be appreciated by readers acquainted with the history of the European Union. The article essentially compiles interesting and relevant primary sources. Some of these materials are necessary and insightful, although they come from many different directions, jumping from the 1950s to the 2000s, from Germany to Croatia and from political speeches to newspaper articles.

An indication of the methods of analysis will make it easier to see what the quotations are for and what they are supposed to imply. First, the selection. The examples are deliberately chosen from critical moments in this discourse, specifically the origins in the

1940s and 50s of what would become the EU, and the period of EU expansion in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Their reconfiguration is based on digestion of sources. They will be paraphrased and condensed, although in some cases, where the sources may not be readily available, they will be cited in an extended manner.

The analysis refers to clarifying the seven sourced references in time, space, authors' presumed nationality and the authors' apparent attitudes to European integration. The references have been categorised in two groups, namely the references from the period of EU origins and the references from the period of EU expansion.

References from the period of EU origins:

1) 1949, West Germany, German authors, apparent proponents of EU integration;
2) 1952, France, German-French author, apparent proponent of EU integration;
3) 1952, West Germany, German author, apparent opponent of EU integration.

References from the period of EU expansion:

4) 2000, United Kingdom, British author, apparent opponent of EU integration;
5) 2003, Germany, French author, apparent proponent of EU integration;
6) 2005, Slovakia, Slovak author, apparent proponent of EU integration;
7) 2009, Croatia, Croatian author, apparent proponent of EU integration.

Regarding the second part of Carolingian and Arthurian dichotomy, in the absence of Arthurianism in EU-related political discourse some Central European artistic representations of Arthurianism, connected to political communication post-1989, will be mentioned. Such an approach will enable discussion about Arthurianism's potential.

6. Research results

6.1. Three early post-war Carolingian references: the prize, the flag and the ironic criticism (1949-1952)

The first three references to Charlemagne were made in Western European space of the institutions and print media in the context of post-war years. I will describe them consecutively in chronological order.

Reference 1: Germany (Aachen), 1949

The first Carolingian reference I will mention comes from the semi-official symbolism of the European integration movement. Since 1949, a high-profile prize, the Charlemagne Prize of the City of Aachen, has been awarded. According to the Charlemagne Prize Proclamation, it is "awarded annually to deserving personalities who have fostered the idea of Western unification in political, economic and intellectual-spiritual regard." In the above mentioned "Proclamation of Christmas 1949" the choice of Charlemagne as a patron is explained also in relation to the "Western" world: "A number of citizens of our city of Aachen, forever bound to it by birth or by fulfilment of their life vocation, have therefore decided to establish an International Prize of the city of Aachen which in memory of the great founder of Western culture is to be named the 'Charlemagne Prize of the City of Aachen'" (Maas et al. 1949).

Among future laureates one finds European and American politicians (e.g. Winston Churchill in 1955, George C. Marshall in 1959), several public intellectuals and from time to time popes (2004, 2016), but also collective entities (the Commission of the European Communities in 1969, the people of Luxembourg in 1986) and even the abstract entity (the recently introduced currency, the euro, in 2002).

From the perspective of more than fifty years, Walter Eversheim, the spokesman of the board of directors of the Society for the Conferring of the International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen, distinguished three levels, on which the prize has had an impact: European, national and local. On the European level the prize constitutes, through political messages, a European forum and a tool to focus public attention on the state of efforts toward integration. Nationally, as Eversheim highlighted, it helps Germans to lay the groundwork for a European consciousness based on international understanding. On the municipal level it enhances "Aachen's standing beyond its borders" – being even a way to revive the city's European past and "to focus the attention of European-minded people on Aachen again, making the name of the Imperial City known beyond its own walls. After all, Aachen was once the centre of the first European empire under Charlemagne" (Eversheim 2003). Walter Eversheim tells the story according to which Engelbert Pfeiffer, the creator of the prize himself proposed to name the award the Charlemagne Prize of the City of Aachen.

In Eversheim words Charlemagne is more than an eponym and a promotional vehicle, but a programme, an agenda, introduction of the idea of the Christian Occident into the Proclamation and presenting such an Occidental idea as a dominant feature in looking back at the Carolingian empire of Charlemagne with unified axio-normative, linguistic, financial, administrative, religion and culture systems, and modelling programme for the future unification of Europe. Thus, it is an award for service in the cause of Europe. In his opening sentence Eversheim quoted a statement of the prize foundation, which called it an international prize to be awarded annually in any sector "for the worthiest contribution in the service of West-European understanding and communal work, and in the service of humanity and world peace" (Eversheim 2003).

The message sent from Aachen more than half a century after the Proclamation 1949 paraphrases the idea of the prize creators and is assigned to the early reference of 1949. Located in West Germany, at the borderland, created by German authors, who apparently were the proponents of EU integration, it uses references to European Middle Ages and postmedieval medievalism. It generates no legal consequences and can be assigned to *acquis mythologique communautaire*, ie. the accumulated symbols with strong axio-normative vision but with no belonging to legal documents such as it would be in the case of preambles of EU documents. It distinguishes them from the corpus of supposed *acquis historique communautaire*.

Reference 2: France (Strasbourg), 1952

The second reference to Charles the Great is not much younger. In 1952 there was discussion as to what the official pan-European flag should be. At that time the debate concerned the case of the Council of Europe, the first intergovernmental and inter-

parliamentary structure on the Old Continent. The author of the finally accepted version, Arsene Heitz, "an employee in the Council's mail room and a talented draughtsman who produced sketches of his own and others' ideas" (Prisacariu 2007) proposed the flag referring to Charles the Great. He gave this idea priority among other ideas, which he had had for the flag. In the letter sent to a Council senior official, Filippo Caracciolo (stamped: Strasbourg, January 5th, 1952), he argued for the green-coloured proposal as inspired by the medieval standard of Charlemagne (the standard, he noted, that was given to Charlemagne by Pope Leon III in 800). Carolingian Europe seemed to be an important point of reference for the project's author, when he wrote in the same letter that he fact of putting the cross of Scandinavian emblems into the standard of Charles the Great may symbolise the advent of Europe more complete than that of Carolingian Empire (*Archives historiques du Conseil de l'Europe* WWW).

The messages sent internally by the German-French author, an apparent proponent of European integration, also belong to the *acquis mythologique communautaire*. Their status is similar to the status of preambles, but the final axio-normative message is graphical, non-textual, not referring to the values verbatim. As a proposal that has finally been rejected, it belongs only to the historical archives and to the discourse surrounding European integration history, not to the officially accepted conglomerate as it has been in the *Reference 1*. The Carolingian-inspired flag project has never been officially accepted and soon became forgotten.

Reference 3: Germany (Bonn), 1952

The third Carolingian reference comes (only coincidentally) from the same day (5th January 1952) when Heitz sent his letter explaining why Charlemagne's standard should be used as the European flag. The German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* printed an article by Hans von Hentig, a law professor previously involved in political activities. He had not long earlier returned to Germany from emigration to North America.[5]

The author takes Carolingian metaphor as granted and does not deny its relevance. He criticises the choice of Carolingian reference in terms of its axiological and normative relevance for the economic community. For him the European political project and its chosen symbolism is delusional and grandeur. However, it can be noted that all three Carolingian references from the years 1949–1952 come from the first years of post-war Europeanisation process, which was expressed as a community of coal and steel on the one hand, and the community of human rights on the other. It is clear that since their very first day, the references to Charlemagne had their proponents and opponents. Over the

[5] In the letter he wrote: "Charlemagne's empire is to be resurrected as the continental Third Power under Frankish leadership. Though it occupies only a small part of Europe, that is the name it has chosen, arousing as it does delusions of grandeur and inspiring awe in American voters unversed in geography. It is, however, worthwhile examining how realistic this dream is. Charlemagne's empire came into being in a world of religious unity. With the exception of remote countries in the East, there were no other powers in the known world. […] Charlemagne's prospective empire would enjoy hardly any crude oil resources on European territory. […] People say Europe but what they really mean is coal. 'Our policy', as Schuman went on to say, 'is not based on sentiment. It is firm and far-sighted.' That's what Charlemagne's idyllic empire looks like" (von Hentig 1952).

years the symbolic prize has accumulated prestige. Despite ongoing euro-scepticism the economic community has extended its reach to other initially Carolingian lands, even if Charlemagne alone would hardly be seen as peaceful. Despite discussion in the 1950s the proposed Carolingian symbolism of the flag has been suspended in favour of Biblical Christian twelve stars. Nevertheless, in all three cases a need to refer to Europe's imagined medieval past, either seriously or ironically, remained. Sometimes it can be seen as superficial euro-medievalism, but the social, cultural and political energy connected to the early European integration debates in the three cases suggests that they belong to *acquis mythologique communautaire*.

6.2. Carolingian references between the West and the East of Europe (2000–2009)

European integration resulted in a supranational entity recognised worldwide as a political actor, in the 1990s becoming a strong magnet for Eastern European countries in their post-communist transition new era. These countries from behind the Iron Curtain struggled between the process of Westernisation – both simultaneous globalisation and Europeanisation influences – and Easternisation in its post-Soviet local shapes. Carolingian references, so far coming from the European West, were now accompanied by Eastern Europeans referring to Charlemagne on their way to European Union accession.

Supranational political projects obviously differ from the national in their scope. They need to be attractive to voters and their elites from different national cultures. To achieve stakeholder and audience positive attention they need to be connected to traditions acceptable even within conflicting memory cultures. These traditions may either be organically developed, or invented by political marketers and ideologists. In search of transcultural mobilisation of memory in Europe through the medium of symbols, European intellectuals, politicians and officials consistently referred to Charles the Great or tried to criticise this reference. Notably, even those who criticised some details of the European integration project, referred to the Carolingian era and its mytho-mnemonic complex.

Reference 4: United Kingdom, 2000

From the positions of what was later to become the impetus behind Brexit, Ken Gulleford wrote an ironic article titled "Prime Minister Blair, young Leo and the Charlemagne Prize" to deconstruct the myth of Charlemagne in an ironic manner. The pretext for criticism was Tony Blair's acceptance of the Charlemagne Prize for services to European integration eighteen months earlier. The selection of words and phrases, when condensed, was such as: "spin doctors had no grasp of European history"; "the empire of Charlemagne was an ephemeral affair ordained by papal trickery barely surviving its founders death and disappearing completely within a century"; "the early forerunners of today's Brussels fat cats"; "single currency [...] if it enjoyed any better fate than its sickly modern counterpart the Euro"; "his canonisation was delayed for some 350 years on the grounds that his sexual exploits were no less extensive than his territorial ones"; "at the Court of

Charlemagne [...] the title of Europe was adopted to describe the continental peninsula so named after Europa, a legendary lady famous for enjoying carnal relations with a Bull"; "barbaric Charlemagne" and finally "a more inauspicious and foreboding symbol than the Charlemagne Prize is difficult to imagine being awarded to a third millennium Prime Minister" (Gulleford 2000).

The above selection of ironic criticism demonstrates the sceptical stance to both the medieval Carolingian figure and its postmedieval use in the symbolic function. Its publication expressed anti-Europeanism typical of some British political circles. In a satirical article Gulleford critiqued the myth of Charlemagne and questioned Tony Blair's acceptance of the Charlemagne Prize for European integration. Gulleford used ironic language to criticise the early influencers of European integration in the overall tone leaving not much space for constructive discussion, far from the usual language of political communication.

Reference 5: Germany (Aachen, award for Valery Giscard d'Estaign), 2003

When German chancellor Gerhard Schroeder made the laudation for U.S. president Bill Clinton receiving the Charlemagne Prize in 2000, he made a clear reference to Western unification, extending the Carolingian symbolism of European unity beyond Europe, but not necessarily including the Eastern part of the continent in this unity, because "as is stated in the Prize's founding act, [it] is awarded for outstanding service to Western unification" (Schröder 2000). The mention of Western unification makes the above speech essentially about reinventing a medieval tradition to suit current political needs, which were expressed even before the EU enlargement of 2004.

The Carolingian tradition seems, however, to be organically developed in France. At least it was propagated as such in probably the most emotional approach towards Charlemagne, expressed by Valery Giscard d'Estaign, the 2003 laureate of Charlemagne Prize. The French connotation may be significant here, as Charlemagne is a national hero of France and for some time even one of its saints, although contested and dubious because of the canonisation by antipope later invalidation. However, at the time of the speech Carolingian references had already for decades been reinvented in the pan-European context by political myth-makers.[6]

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[6] Giscard d'Estaign said: "In awarding me this Charlemagne prize, you have caused me to feel an intense emotion and happiness. You have made of me a distant and humble disciple of Charlemagne. I say 'distant', because it is some 1200 years since he took on – in the manner of his time – the creation of a European Empire. And 'humble', because the task I am now charged with is simply to draft a lasting blueprint for Europe! It is a task that Charlemagne would have had some trouble in carrying out, since it appears that he failed to master the art of writing, although his extraordinary energy and his skill at arms enabled him to assemble a collection of territories in which Europe could already be seen in outline. The emotion stems from a childhood memory. The legend, by which the figure of Charles the Great was transformed and enhanced, gradually made him into a saint. In recollection of the quotation from his capitularies where he says that 'every father of a family must send his son to school, until such time as he is properly educated', it was a tradition in the schools and colleges of the University of France to celebrate Saint Charlemagne's day. On that day – 28th January, the anniversary of Charlemagne's death – the schools would hold a feast for their most deserving pupils. I was invited only once, but, along with my classmates, how proud I was! [...] I am conscious of the responsibility that weighs upon our Convention: our task is to draw up – for the first time in the history

This long passage, intentionally included here in its full extent, exemplifies the category of Carolingian reference, which can be synthesised briefly as both the evident cult of Charlemagne and an expression of Carolingian tradition. Whereas for the Euro-American political alliance Carolingian equals 'international' and 'Western', for the French elites Carolingian means emanating from the French centre towards European semi-peripheries and peripheries. This piece of *acquis mythologique communautaire* by the French politician reflects on the significance of being awarded the Charlemagne Prize and draws connections between the historical figure of Charlemagne, the author's personal experiences, and the contemporary task of drafting a pan-European Constitution.

Valery Giscard d'Estaign expresses intense emotion and happiness upon receiving the Charlemagne Prize, portraying a sense of humility by considering themselves even a disciple of Charlemagne. The humility is emphasised by contrasting their task of drafting a European blueprint with Charlemagne's attempts of creation of an empire. The author shares a childhood memory of celebrating Saint Charlemagne's day in schools, where the legendary figure of Charlemagne was transformed into a saint. This personal connection adds a layer of emotional significance to the prize and creates one more bridge between the past and the present. The piece delves into the historical attempts to unify Europe, citing figures like Caesar, Charlemagne, and Napoleon who sought unification through force. The author contrasts these historical approaches with the contemporary effort to unify Europe through the drafting of a Constitution, highlighting the shift from the sword to the pen.

The central question raised is whether the substitute of the Charlemagne sword, a pen, can succeed where the sword failed in unifying Europe. The author implies that the task at hand, drafting a pan-European Constitution, is a unique endeavour in the history of Europe. It signifies a departure from past methods of coercion and conquest, emphasising a more cooperative and diplomatic approach. The author contends that Europe is more than just a cooperative of Member States; it is a place where people feel European and where histories are interconnected. Charlemagne's example is used to illustrate this point, showing how his reign, burial, and familial connections spanned different regions of Europe, contributing to a shared historical and cultural identity. The author acknowledges the weight of responsibility on the Convention tasked with drafting a pan-European Constitution. This responsibility is portrayed as unprecedented in European history, as it seeks to define the continent's political and legal framework in a way that reflects the interconnectedness of its people and their shared history. In summary, this part of *acquis mythologique communautaire* combines personal reflections, historical references, and

of Europe – a pan-European Constitution. Our continent has seen successive attempts at unifying it: Caesar, Charlemagne and Napoleon, among others. The aim has been to unify it by force of arms, by the sword. We, for our part, seek to unify it by the pen. Will the pen succeed where the sword has finally failed? [...] Because Europe is more than just a cooperative of Member States, because people in our countries feel European too, and because sometimes our histories are inextricably intertwined: take Charlemagne himself, crowned in Rome, his eldest son reigned over Aquitaine – it was Charlemagne's adviser, Alcuin of York, who reformed the monasteries of Touraine; that same Charlemagne is buried not a stone's throw from here, while his father and mother, Pepin and Bertha, are buried in Saint-Denis, at the gates of Paris" (Giscard d'Estaing 2003: p. 1–6).

a forward-looking perspective to emphasise the unique nature of the task at hand, which is the drafting of a pan-European Constitution and its potential to shape the future of Europe in a way that diverges from past attempts at unification.

Reference 6: Slovakia, 2005

The complementary appropriation of Charlemagne can be found in the European Central East. For Eastern Europeans, the Carolingian means precedent. Politicians from the region recognise Charlemagne as the person who unified Europe. This is visible in the speech of the Deputy Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, Pál Csáky in 2005: "The European Union lives through historical moments. 1st May 2004 became a new and perhaps one of the most important milestones in its history. All 25 capitals of the new Europe celebrated the success of the project that created conditions for shaping an alliance, unprecedented from the times of Charlemagne (Charles the Great)" (Csáky 2005).

The text highlights a significant historical moment for the European Union on May 1, 2004. On this date, the EU witnessed a crucial milestone as 25 capitals of the newly expanded Europe celebrated the success of a project that set the stage for the formation of an unprecedented alliance. The accomplishment is likened to the times of Charlemagne, emphasising the historical importance of this development in the context of European integration. This connection is presented very straightforwardly, with no intermediary moments. It exemplifies mythical thinking, extratemporal space of connection through space. Eastern Europe seems to be unified with the West in the unprecedented analogy to medieval times.

Reference 7: Croatia (Dubrovnik), 2009

Another Eastern European reference to Charles the Great comes from the Croatian city of Dubrovnik in 2009. Parts of the Carolingian myth were at that time presented in a way which suited the context of Europeanisation and forthcoming EU accession. The book *Roland's European Paths* was described on the Europe House Dubrovnik website.[7]

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[7] As this extract is not easily available, I decided to quote it in an extended version: "The book *Roland's European Paths* has been published by Europe House Dubrovnik with the aim of highlighting the common roots of the united Europe. Like invisible threads, these roots linked for centuries different parts of the European continent despite their long-standing political separation. The beginnings of some of these threads go as far back as the 8th century – the period of the first real European ruler, Charlemagne, who laid the foundations for the united Europe. Roland, one of his most faithful knights, over the centuries became a symbol of justice, independence and freedom. Since the 15th century, his image on stone or wooden columns has adorned many European town centres. One of the most beautiful columns is that in Dubrovnik where, as in Italy, the knight's name has been changed to Orlando.
The texts for the book *Roland's European Paths* have been written by twelve experts in history, sociology, literature and law from different European countries. In order to further illustrate the European component of this book, all the texts have been translated into Croatian, English, German, French and Italian. The book is illustrated by 350 photographs of landscapes, through which the real Roland – Orlando moved, as well as all the extant Roland columns from Riga to Dubrovnik. Roland is believed to have been the nephew of the famous emperor Charlemagne and to have died a heroic death on 15th August 778 in Roncesvalles, a gorge in the Pyrenees. Pilgrims on their way to one of the most important European centres of pilgrimage, Santiago de Compostela, spread the oral tradition about the fearless knight throughout Europe. Several centuries after his death, Roland became the hero of one of the most famous medieval epics, the *Song of Roland,* which inspired numerous writers and story-tellers throughout Eu-

Clearly visible in it is an attempt to use the Carolingian context in the Europeanisation process. However, this time the reference is not just generally Carolingian, but also specific. Roland, the Carolingian first knight, is an indicator of Europeanness and evidence of Croatian belonging to the socio-cultural community of Europeans. Dubrovnik is being self-presented as linked to Western Europe through the medium of the legendary character. The book mentions Carolingian knight Roland and his European paths, published by Europe House Dubrovnik. It explores the common roots of a united Europe, symbolised by the legendary figure. The roots, depicted as invisible threads, have connected different parts of the European continent for centuries, transcending political boundaries. The narrative traces back to the 8th century with Charlemagne, the first European ruler, seen as laying the foundations for a united Europe. A loyal knight of Charlemagne, became a symbol of justice, independence, and freedom over the centuries. Since the 15th century, his image has adorned columns in many European town centres, including Dubrovnik, where the knight is referred to as Orlando.

The book is a collaborative effort, featuring texts written by twelve social sciences and humanities experts from various European countries. To emphasise the European aspect, the texts are translated into five languages and illustrated with landscapes and Roland columns from European countries such as Latvia and Croatia. Among the words and phrases such as "a symbol of European heroism", "Roland's European journey", "a symbol of freedom and state independence", "a symbol of freedom" the notification of Croatia having remained outside of enlarged EU borders despite the recent EU enlargement is highlighted. The authors refer to the importance of Dubrovnik in the common history of Europe by connecting various aspects of reverence for Roland from the 8th to the 21st century. The project underscores the enduring significance of the legendary Carolingian knight Roland as a symbol of unity and freedom throughout European history.

The EU enlargement and expansion context between West and East induces the local Europe House, a non-profit organisation, impulse to search for European roots and to bring up the Carolingian reference. The activity contributed to the symbolic universe of Croatian EU aspirations, which were finally fulfilled four years later, in 2013.

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rope. In Italy, due to the linguistic particularities of the Apennine Peninsula, Roland becomes Orlando. As one of the most faithful of Charlemagne's knights, over the centuries Roland was in Germany assigned the role of keeper of the imperial rights, by which the power of the feudal lords was restricted. First Roland's columns as symbols of protection and the guarantee of imperial rights appeared in the first half of the 14th century precisely in German towns. As a model for those columns, master-builders used paintings and statues of Roland from French churches, as in his native France in that period the knight was honoured among the common people as a saint who had died a martyr's death. The oldest preserved column was erected in 1404 in Bremen. One of the stops on Roland's European 'journey' was Dubrovnik, which took over the Italian version of the knight's name. Orlando's column was put up in Dubrovnik as early as 1419. As a symbol of freedom and state independence, he was granted a central position in the public life of the Republic of Dubrovnik. Orlando is a symbol of freedom even today, and on top of his column during the Dubrovnik Summer Festival, a flag waves proudly wearing the inscription LIBERTAS. After the recent enlargement of the European Union, the Dubrovnik Orlando is the only one that has remained outside its borders. Europe House Dubrovnik, through its multimedia project Roland's European Paths, is linking up various aspects of reverence for Roland throughout Europe from 8th to 21st century, with the aim of pointing out in a new way the importance of Dubrovnik in the common history of Europe" (Europski Dom Dubrovnik 2009).

7. Discussion on Carolingian references

We may sum up the review of Carolingian references with several observations. First, all these references to Charles the Great are either attempts to permanently link the medieval ruler with the idea of European unity or attempts to criticise the European project. Whether supportive or critical of European unity, all these references permanently link it to Charlemagne. As we read the negative quotes, there is no attempt to criticise a connection between the Carolingians and the EU. In fact, the critics take the connection for granted and use it to make their criticisms. They criticise the Carolingian Empire and the EU, but they do not suggest that the idea of a connection is a false one – they seem to agree that the connection is valid. Even when the symbol is criticised, it is at the same time a criticism of the unification project, not just its symbolic layer. Through the medium of attacking the symbol, the idea of integration is attacked. This way the symbol is accepted by its opponents as the embodiment of what they contest. The title of the first such ironic article is in the German original *Karl der Grosse und Koks* which means "Charlemagne and coke" and connects the symbolic ruler to grey coal-based fuel. It suggested that attacks on European idea would be conducted in forthcoming years with the use of irony towards Charlemagne. Several decades later, this is exactly what the above-mentioned British Eurosceptic writer Ken Gulleford did. When he criticised the Carolingian reference usage, he was criticising the idea of European unity as well. Both Euro-sceptical and Euro-enthusiastic references seem to refer to Charlemagne as a saint, empowering either sceptical or enthusiastic stance. This is an interesting discursive parallel between European warrior and Christian saint context.

The euro-enthusiastic discourse, as was the case of the Croatian city of Dubrovnik located in South-East Europe, followed Western European tradition of positively referring to Charlemagne, his knights and his court. There are also more general, but similarly positive, references to Charlemagne in Eastern Europe at the time of European Union enlargement. The phenomenon of referring to Charlemagne here takes either general or specific forms in Eastern Europe, but the references seem to be appreciative. No critical reference has been revealed in the analysed material.

The official documents of Aachen, the city which for half a century has sought to build its contemporary position on the historical reference to Charlemagne, are somehow mirrored by the case of Dubrovnik's cultural institution, trying to refer the Carolingian hero Roland on a Croatian path to joining the political community focused around Germany and France. Both cities were arenas for referring to Charlemagne in a European integrationary context.

The Western European aspect of the Charlemagne Prize is more evident than its generally broader European aspect. It was obvious in the 1950s, but from the 1990s highlighting the Western European quality of the Prize did not reflect the forthcoming accession of new countries to the European Union. The Western European focus during the European Union enlargement process, even one year before the accession of "new European" countries, raises some doubts related to the potential of the Carolingian legacy for European identity-building.

We need to remember that the EU enlargement process was built on the principle of European integration conditionality: the legally binding *acquis communautaire* has to be accepted by a newcomer, although some pre-negotiated transitional period is available. It seems that Eastern European officials wanted to adjust their discourse to the Western focus on Carolingian references. The correlation with these countries' EU accession is clear, and we can expect it to be a part of their communication strategy at that time.

A rock-solid ending showing what this article has given us and what new questions it opens up, may be not possible without discussing two more issues. One is the legacy of the Carolingian and Arthurian dichotomy for European integration politics. Another one is acknowledging Charlemagne and King Arthur common status between *acquis communautaire* and *acquis mythologique communautaire* countering two of Gerner's points. One, that King Arthur is equally as applicable as Charlemagne as a legendary model for the EU – he has not been. Two, that Charlemagne represents peaceful integration, whereas Arthur represents war and conquest – he need not do so.

In the exploration of Carolingian references in the context of European integration, a multifaceted analysis emerges, shedding light on the intricate interplay between historical symbolism, political discourse, and the collective identity of a continent in transition. The review encapsulates various perspectives, presenting Charlemagne as a pivotal figure either fostering the ideals of European unity or becoming a target for critics of the integration project. Whether supportive or critical, these references inevitably tether the notion of European unity to Charlemagne, creating a permanent link between the medieval ruler and the evolving European identity.

Notably, the critique of the European idea seldom challenges the connection between the Carolingians and the EU. Even in negative quotes, the implicit agreement on the validity of this connection becomes evident. Critics may scrutinise the Carolingian Empire and the EU, yet the underlying acceptance of the connection prevails. The attacks on the symbolic layer, exemplified by the ironic article *Karl der Grosse und Koks*, not only criticise the symbol but concurrently assail the entire unification project. In this way, opponents unwittingly acknowledge the symbol as the embodiment of what they contest.

The Euro-sceptical and Euro-enthusiastic references to Charlemagne cast him as a quasi-saint, empowering either sceptical or enthusiastic perspectives. This duality presents a fascinating parallel between the European warrior and Christian saint contexts, showcasing the versatility of Charlemagne as a symbolic entity. Euro-enthusiastic discourse, exemplified by Dubrovnik, aligns with Western European traditions, positively referencing Charlemagne, his knights, and his court. Conversely, in Eastern Europe during the EU enlargement period, references to Charlemagne are generally appreciative, lacking critical tones.

Cities like Aachen and Dubrovnik, with historical ties to Charlemagne and Roland, become symbolic arenas for expressing European integration aspirations. However, the Western European focus of the Charlemagne Prize, even during EU enlargement, raises questions about the broader applicability of the Carolingian legacy for shaping a pan-European identity.

The integration process, built on the principle of European integration conditionality, prompts Eastern European officials to align their discourse with the Western emphasis on Carolingian references. The correlation between the usage of such references and the accession of these countries to the EU highlights a deliberate communication strategy.

8. The case of Polish Arthurianism reception as a peaceful Arthurian message

The case of Polish Arthurianism unfolds as a distinctive and peaceful reinterpretation of the Arthurian legend, steering away from traditional themes of expansion and conquest. Explored in various, including literary works such as Maria Kuncewiczowa's *Tristan 1946* and Tadeusz Słobodzianek's political drama *Merlin. The Other Story*, as well as visual representations like Magdalena Abakanowicz's sculpture *King Arthur's Court* and the Japanese film *Avalon*, have contributed to the evolving Polish Arthurian tradition. The exploration of Arthuriana in Poland extends beyond literature to encompass psychological, political, feminist, and conspiracy-theoretical perspectives, reflecting the multifaceted nature of this cultural revival. Notably, Władysław Pasikowski's post-1989 creations, delving into the complexities of loyalty through the knightly archetype, challenge established narratives and raise profound questions about fidelity amidst societal transformations. In essence, Polish Arthurianism emerges as a unique cultural reinvention, reconnecting with forgotten traditions and offering a distinctive narrative within the broader global discourse surrounding Arthurian legends.

The reception of Arthurianism in Poland never refers to expansion and conquest. Several instances of diverse Polish Arthurian traditions, previously presented at the fourth annual Conference for Medieval Studies *(Re)Imagining Arthur: Cultural and Theoretical Contexts of the Arthurian Legends* at Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana, provide intriguing insights from Central Europe. Despite Poland's medieval foundation in Europe and a state tradition dating back to at least 966, there was no distinct Polish Arthurian tradition during the Middle Ages, a period when the Arthurian legend was popular in the broader European cultural context. However, recent processes of simultaneous linguistic Anglicisation, cultural Americanisation and political Europeanisation, have prompted Poles to re-examine and reinvent their Arthurian narratives. The ongoing construction of Polish Arthurianism is becoming more prominent, particularly in the cultural discourse of the era of EU expansion. Various associations exploring Arthuriana in Poland often involve analyses ranging from the psychological impact of World War II to feminist or anti-feminist discourses, as well as political, fantasy, or conspiracy-theoretical approaches. The development of Polish Arthurianism, influenced by global trends, may even prompt questions about the role of Arthurian components in Polish national identity.

Tristan 1946, published in 1967 in Poland and translated into English in 1974, represents an early manifestation of Polish interest in the Arthurian legend. The author, Maria Kuncewiczowa, a Polish immigrant in the U.S., confronted the Tristan and Isolde myth with the experiences of those who lived through World War II. Since the 1990s,

interest in Arthurian themes has grown in Polish culture, with works such as Tadeusz Słobodzianek's political drama *Merlin. The Other Story* and Andrzej Sapkowski's Arthurian short story *Maladie* contributed to the evolving Polish Arthurian tradition. In addition to literature, Polish sculpture, exemplified by Magdalena Abakanowicz's *King Arthur's Court* in Warsaw's park *Pole Mokotowskie*, and the Japanese film *Avalon*, made in Poland, further illustrate the prevalence of Arthurian themes in Polish art. Within scholarship, Tadeusz Komendant's interpretation of the Arthurian legend as an almost-religious matter offers a unique perspective in Polish public discourse. The increased interest in the Arthurian legend in Poland reflects broader trends and the widespread influence of Arthurian narratives, now infused with a distinct East European context. This phenomenon, including the exploration of Arthurian elements in the Siedlęcin tower, represents a form of Polish cultural reinvention, reconnecting with forgotten intercultural traditions and challenging the idea of Arthurianism as foreign domination.

Władysław Pasikowski's post-1989 creations challenge sacred mnemo-mythical narratives and address taboos, contributing to the ongoing debate on whether Polish culture is linked to Western Europe. His works portray military figures, inherently embodying high loyalty to the state. Pasikowski taps into the archetype of the warrior in its knightly form, a central figure in European cultures rooted in the imagery of the European Middle Ages. The choice of the knight is not incidental, as within European culture, knights are consistently aligned with the "good side" and form the narrative's focal point. Symbolically, they represent the centre of the world, almost sacred and morally superior, adhering to the code of chivalry regardless of their sovereign. Even knightly anti-heroes, known as "black knights," adhere to the code of chivalry, and their villainous status can often be transcended through death or reconciliation within royal communities. The knight's inherent quality of loyalty, regardless of the side one stands on – especially in the post-communist context of remaining faithful to the newly "liberated" country despite past involvement in the authoritarian regime – Is a thought-provoking theme in Pasikowski's artistic work. Introducing the narrative of betrayal alongside disillusionment with the new power adds complexity to Pasikowski's works, consistently posing the question: Can betrayers also be knights, and can knights, in turn, be betrayers? Pasikowski's central inquiry revolves around how to maintain loyalty to the transforming state and the transformed society, forming the core of his artistic exploration. The answer is articulated in terms of a mythscape developed into an *acquis mythologique* (Toczyski 2018).

The case of Polish Arthurianism represents a distinctive and peaceful reinterpretation of the Arthurian legend, deviating from the traditional themes of expansion and conquest. Explored in diverse traditions at the fourth annual Conference for Medieval Studies, the phenomenon reflects a contemporary resurgence of interest in Arthurian narratives in Poland, driven by linguistic Anglicisation, cultural Americanisation, and political Europeanisation. This cultural revival, marked by literature, sculpture, and cinema, prompts a multifaceted exploration of Arthuriana, challenging sacred narratives and prompting questions about its role in shaping Polish national identity. Władysław

Pasikowski's post-1989 creations, particularly his exploration of loyalty through the knightly archetype, contribute to this peaceful Arthurian message, delving into the complexities of fidelity amidst societal transformations. In essence, Polish Arthurianism serves as a unique cultural reinvention, reconnecting with forgotten traditions and presenting a distinct narrative within the global Arthurian discourse.

9. Conclusions and directions for further studies

The article introduces two additional considerations: the legacy of the Carolingian and Arthurian dichotomy for European integration politics and the common status of Charlemagne and King Arthur between *acquis communautaire* and *acquis mythologique communautaire*. The absence of King Arthur as a model for EU integration raises the question of why this alternative mythical figure has not been utilised. The Arthurian component of the article suggests that Arthuriana could offer a unique perspective within the European integration project. However, delivering a comprehensive exploration of Arthuriana would require further analysis and understanding of its potential impact. It may add depth to the historical or mythological elements of Europe's cultural heritage, embedding the Arthurian Round Table in the symbolic layer of the European Union's predecessor. Currently the Charlemagne Prize and associated buildings embody a semi-official cultural memory of Europe, reflecting the common heritage of the continent. The review of Carolingian references underscores their significance in shaping the discourse on European integration. The article encourages a deeper exploration of the Arthurian dimension, positing it as a potential avenue for understanding and adjusting the integration project. The complex interplay between historical, symbolic, and mythological elements contributes to the ongoing evolution of the European identity.

The question remains: why has Arthur not been used as a model for EU integration? As even just speculation on this may be informative, I suggest that local Arthurian traditions are currently reinvented and in the common awareness were rather seen as related to Britain, Albion, The Isles, not Europe as a whole. Reading articles on the Arthur legend in Central Europe may be an important starting point. There is much more in Arthuriana. I argue that compared to Carolingiana it can be seen as an equally peaceful message from our ancestors.

How to deal with the subtle European identity of those who either are English speakers unfamiliar with French linguistic identities or whose only *lingua franca* (sic!) is English for Speakers of Other Languages, available through imperfect school Anglicisation and through Anglophone global culture? The Arthurian myth available in both the medieval legends and postmedieval narratives is a suggestion worth considering within the political European integration project. The symbolic heritage of Europeans can be approached through Arthuriana, contributing to the pedagogy of Europeanisation.

I have explored and described the usage of a medieval Charlemagne myth and Carolingian empire metaphors as the imagined prototype of European integration. The analysis of Carolingian myth usage prepared by Gerner was the conceptual tool with

which contemporary references to Charlemagne were approached. As Gerner suggests, the Carolingian myth should be analysed in comparison with the Arthurian myth. Their Western European medieval origins and knightly content surrounding the main character of the king suggest that they are two sides of the same imaginative phenomenon. However, only the Carolingian component of it seems to be cotemporarily used in the European integration process, both by supporters and critics of the integration process.

The Arthurian component of the dichotomy seems to need both reworking, understanding anew, and adjusting for the integration project. A prestigious award for media-makers is called *Médaille Charlemagne pour des Médias Européens*. One can easily imagine the Round Table medal being handed out at one of the Hanseatic "Arthus Courts," a possible beginning of a new symbolic play in the realm of supranational politics.

Mythological and historical elements have been employed since the inter-war period, connecting to the shared cultural heritage of the European continent. As the Arthurian side of the analysis is less prominent, it may be seen as hardly of equal weight with the Carolingian one. The main thought on Arthurian references, or the lack thereof, is that the Arthurian component of Gerner's dichotomy seems to need both reworking, understanding anew, and adjusting for the integration project. The historical or mythological elements of Europe's cultural heritage were visible in the symbolic layer of the predecessor to the European Union as the Charlemagne. Perchoc sees as the Carolingian king's high popularity "because he appeared to be German to the Germans and French to the French" and "his empire also very much encompassed the regions that eventually united into the ECSC [European Community of Steel and Coal]," embodying "a particular cultural memory of Europe, disconnected from the ongoing process of integration through the EU" (Perchoc 2017).

This article was aimed at presenting different approaches to the Carolingian metaphor in the European context. Based on discourses available in the public sphere, it has been shown that the character of Charlemagne may induce strong emotional effects as well as cognitive reactions leading towards peaceful European unity, in terms of Gerner's dichotomy between the Carolingian and the Arthurian. The Carolingian metaphor is also, as shown, the object of ironic reactions among critics of the European project. It makes this metaphor a well-established imaginative category, which should be treated as an indicator of changes in the forthcoming phases of the integration process in Europe. The Carolingian myth dominates Europe's integration discourse, although the Arthurian myth could bring a unique perspective, and the process of European integration is deeply rooted in the *acquis mythologique communautaire*, which includes both symbols, myths and memory, making them an important part of European identity construction. Thus, further research into the potential of Arthurian myth in the context of European integration is worthwhile.

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