

# Heinz Pirang's *Das baltische Herrenhaus* and the Speaking Stones: Familiarity and Familiarity of Manors in Estonia

by Kristina Jõekalda

## Introduction

Estonia is rich in monuments that represent an 'alien' past – that have not just changed hands, but gone to the ownership of completely different groups of people both socially and ethnically. Yet the period before 1918 was marked by an untypically strong tradition of the Baltic Germans in terms of the material heritage of the history of art, especially the manor houses, in what later became Estonia and Latvia. With the events of the 20th century, the history of the area is marked by numerous discontinuities:<sup>1</sup> there are no manor estates that have been in the possession of the same family over generations without ruptures. Most of them were nationalized in 1918–1919 (and as the centenary showed, this topic can still cause heated debate today<sup>2</sup>). Ruptures such as the First World War also greatly shaped the field of heritage protection.<sup>3</sup>

In this article I want to look at the connections between the valorization and preservation of the heritage of manor architecture and family history, or rather, at some aspects of the self-image of the Baltic German community and the nobility regarding their private property in the first decades of the 20th century, when the cultural memories of several groups actively competed with one another.<sup>4</sup> To what extent was manor architecture addressed through the lens of family tradition in the historiography of art? Also, what has been the afterlife of this tradition following the emigration of former estate owners?

I intend to do this by means of critical historiography, restricting my analysis to the research about manor houses, especially Heinz Pirang's (1876–1936) three-volume *Das baltische Herrenhaus*.<sup>5</sup>

- 1 See Hasso Krull: *Katkestuse kultuur* [The culture of interruption], Tallinn 1996; Krista Kodres, Giedre Mickūnaitė et al.: *Cultures of Interruption. Art History in the Baltic States: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania*, in: Matthew Rampley et al. (eds.): *Art History and Visual Studies in Europe: Transnational Discourses and National Frameworks*, Leiden, Boston 2012, pp. 249-274. I wish to thank Ulrike Plath and Krista Kodres for their comments on previous versions of this article.
- 2 E.g. Silja Lättemäe: *Omanike keskliidu juht: eestlased peaksid baltisakslastelt maa äravõtmise pärast vabandama* [Head of the Central Association of Estonian Owners: Estonians ought to apologize in front of the Baltic Germans for disposessing them of their land], in: *Maaleht*, 2nd October 2019, <https://maaleht.delfi.ee/news/maaleht/elu/omanike-keskliidu-juht-eestlased-peaksid-baltisakslastelt-maa-aravotmise-parast-vabandama?id=87600987> [accessed: 3rd October 2019].
- 3 See Beate Störtkuhl (ed.): *Architekturgeschichte und kulturelles Erbe – Aspekte der Baudenkmalpflege in Ostmitteleuropa*, Frankfurt/Main et al. 2006; Robert Born, Beate Störtkuhl (eds.): *Apologeten der Vernichtung oder 'Kunstschützer'? Kunsthistoriker der Mittelmächte im Ersten Weltkrieg*, Köln et al. 2017.
- 4 For more on this see Kristina Jõekalda: *Heritage, Patrimony or Legacy? Baltic German and Estonian Cultural Dialectic in Facing the Local Past*, in: *Letonica* 37 (2018), pp. 186-201. See also Heide W. Whelan: *Adapting to Modernity: Family, Caste and Capitalism among the Baltic German Nobility*, Köln et al. 1999.
- 5 Heinz Pirang: *Das baltische Herrenhaus*, vol. 1-3, Riga 1926–1930.



Ill. 1: Retouched photograph of Heinz Pirang. Reproduced from M.[art-Ivo] Eller: Pirang, Heinrich, arhitekt ja kunstiajaloolane [architect and art historian], in: Ibidem (gen. ed.): Eesti kunsti ja arhitektuuri biograafiline leksikon [Biografisches Lexikon der Kunst und Architektur Estlands], Tallinn 1996, p. 388.

The book was published in Riga during 1926–1930, issued by *Verlag Jonck & Poliewsky*, in close cooperation with the *Gesellschaft für Geschichte und Altertumskunde der Ostseeprovinzen Russlands* (henceforth GGA). It was his most outstanding scholarly work. Remaining the only comprehensive account on local manor architecture for decades, this monograph is the most obvious candidate for such a historiographical investigation. In Pirang's own words:

“Es ist in hohem Grade auffallend und erscheint zunächst unverständlich, dass ein so wertvoller Bautypus in unserer gesamten Fachliteratur bisher noch nie architekturgeschichtlich zusammenfassend untersucht worden ist. [...] Sie wird umso mehr unverständlich, als die Zahl der Herrenhäuser unendlich groß ist, und viele von ihnen künstlerisch hervorragend genannt werden müssen.”<sup>6</sup>

Testifying to its continued importance, it was republished in facsimile by the Hirschheydt publishing house half a century later.<sup>7</sup> Since the 1990s, manors in Estonia and Latvia

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem, vol. 1, Riga 1926, p. 16.

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem, vol. 1-3, Hannover-Döhren <sup>2</sup>1976–1979 [1926–1930].

themselves have been studied on innumerable occasions.<sup>8</sup> Although a brief sentence about Pirang's book is a must in the introduction of each study about Estonian or Latvian manor architecture, the historiography about manors – as a research goal in its own right – has not been much addressed. How much do we really know about Pirang's approach? And how much does the book that seems to bear so closely on family heritage actually deal with it? In the given case, there seem to be other aspects of inheritance besides family lineage that have acquired a more prominent position in historiography. Manor houses are often treated as metonyms for Baltic German noble families, and even more often as representations of Baltic Germandom in general.<sup>9</sup> The idea of the manor as a metonym for Baltic Germandom is best captured and taken to the extreme in Pirang's book. "Built monuments are historical sources", Pirang declares in his introduction, and goes on with his oft-quoted claim:

"Das Herrenhaus ist ein kernbaltischer Bautypus, rassig wie kein anderer. Könnte man das Wort 'baltisch' komparieren, man müsste den Superlativ auf das Herrenhaus anwenden. Dieses Haus ist urbaltisch. Sein Bauherr ist der baltische Adel."<sup>10</sup>

The son of a merchant, Pirang was born and died in Riga. He was trained as an architect in Riga, Dresden and Berlin, and also practiced as one throughout his life. He consulted several institutions in matters of architecture, construction and heritage preservation and published about twenty articles on monuments and heritage conservation. He has been called one of the main developers of the Western tradition in Baltic heritage preservation.<sup>11</sup> Pirang was on the board of the *Rigasche Architekten-Verein*, a corresponding member of the Learned Estonian Society and a contributor to the undertakings of the GGA. In 1910–1915 he was a *Dozent* in architectural history at the Riga Polytechnic Institute; thereafter the institute was physically removed to Moscow until 1917. Upon return to Riga Pirang resumed his position as *Dozent*, but was also politically and socially active, becoming a member of the Riga City Council and a board member of the *Deutsch-Baltische Nationalrat*. In late 1917

8 See e.g. Juhan Maiste: *Eestimaa mõisad* [Manorial architecture in Estonia], Tallinn 1996; Ants Hein: *Eesti mõisaarhitektuur. Historitsismist juugendini* [Manor architecture in Estonia: From the revival styles to Art Nouveau], Tallinn 2003; Ilse von zur Mühlen (ed.): *Glanz und Elend. Mythos und Wirklichkeit der Herrenhäuser im Baltikum*, Lindenberg/Allgäu 2012; Imants Lancmanis: *Vidzemes muižu arhitektūra / Architektur Livländischer Gutshäuser, Rundāle* 2015; Kilian Heck, Sabine Bock et al. (eds.): *Schlösser und Herrenhäuser der Ostseeregion. Bausteine einer europäischen Kulturlandschaft / Castles and Manor Houses in the Baltic Sea Region: Components of an European Cultural Heritage*, Schwerin 2017.

9 E.g. in literature. Of late see Tõnu Önnepalu: *Klaasveranda* [Glass veranda], Tallinn 2016. See the review: Ulrike Plath: *Klaasveranda ilma klaasita. Kolm võimalust mõista mõisakultuuri 21. sajandil* [Glass veranda without glass: Three possibilities to understand manor culture in 21st century], in: *Vikerkaar* 1-2 (2017), pp. 171-175. See also Carl Mothander: *Barone, Bauern und Bolschewiken in Estland*, transl. Fred von Hahn, Weissenhorn 2005 [1943].

10 Pirang, *Herrenhaus* (see note 5), vol. 1, pp. 15, 7.

11 Ojars Sparitis: *200 Jahre kunst- und architekturhistorische Forschung in Lettland*, in: *Homburger Gespräche* 23 (2006), Kiel 2007, pp. 37-57, here p. 43; M.[art-Ivo] Eller: *Pirang, Heinrich, arhitekt ja kunstiajaloolane* [architect and art historian], in: *Ibidem* (gen. ed.): *Eesti kunsti ja arhitektuuri biograafiline leksikon* [Biografisches Lexikon der Kunst und Architektur Estlands], Tallinn 1996, p. 388.

he was the main organizer of the *Livland – Estland – Ausstellung*. In 1919–1921 Pirang resided in Barsinghausen, Germany, where he worked as an architect and *Oberlehrer*. He then came back to Riga, where he first taught mathematics and art history at the *Städtische Deutsche Mittelschule*, and from 1923 he became *Dozent* in art history at the *Herder-Institut* (where he was a colleague of Reinhard Wittram, among others).<sup>12</sup>

Published in the 1920s, Pirang's book automatically became a factor in the heated discussions over ways of coming to terms with the 'alien' heritage left by the leading social classes of past rulers, who in the case of Estonia and Latvia also happened to be foreigners. Art history and visual studies have long opened up more varied approaches, and I take particular interest in the 'in-betweenness' of heritage-related topics. Heritage is not something restricted to the academic zone of research, although the objects under discussion can be the same as those in traditional art-historical studies.<sup>13</sup> When the focus is placed on 'heritage', issues of ownership, inheritance and the means of preservation or reconstruction are raised, creating a link to the real world in all its multifariousness. At the same time, categories such as nostalgia, emotionality and patriotic feeling are also written into the concept of heritage.<sup>14</sup>

As we know from the work of Benedict Anderson and others, heritage is closely bound with memory, tradition and nation.<sup>15</sup> All of them bring to light certain aspects of the past, influenced by the way they are viewed in the present.<sup>16</sup> As art historian Matthew Rampley has neatly put it, heritage is all about idealized images: "the difference between heritage and history lies in the fact that the former negotiates a relation to the past primarily through reliance on reified symbols of the past [...] which then become overburdened with meaning by the communities that have laid claim to them as comprising part of their identity."<sup>17</sup> The lens of heritage is indeed a dangerous one for its political implications. The fabrication of heritage and this artificial memory can easily end up creating or supporting political goals of a community.<sup>18</sup> 'Heritage' has been accused of being prone to instrumentalization by the dominant ideology.<sup>19</sup> This is especially the case with texts such as those by Pirang that at

12 Heinrich Pirang (1876–1936), in: Wilhelm Lenz (ed.): *Deutschbaltisches Biographisches Lexikon 1710–1960*, Köln et al. 1970, p. 59. See Gert von Pistohlkors: Reinhard Wittram in Riga 1925–1939. Versuch einer Annäherung, in: *Jahrbuch des baltischen Deutschtums* 60 (2013), pp. 122–155.

13 See Kristina Jõekalda: *German Monuments in the Baltic Heimat? A Historiography of Heritage in the 'Long Nineteenth Century'*, Tallinn 2020 [forthcoming].

14 See Aleida Assmann: *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives*, Cambridge 2011, p. 129; Matthew Rampley: *Contested Histories: Heritage and/as the Construction of the Past: An Introduction*, in: Ibedim (ed.): *Heritage, Ideology, and Identity in Central and Eastern Europe: Contested Pasts, Contested Presents*, Woodbridge, Rochester 2012, pp. 1–20, here pp. 2–4. See also Dana Arnold: *Reading Architectural History*, London et al. 2002.

15 Benedict Anderson: *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, London et al., revised 1991 [1983], p. 22.

16 E.g. David Lowenthal: *Fabricating Heritage*, in: *History & Memory* 10 (1998), no. 1, pp. 5–24, here pp. 7 f.; Anthony D. Smith: *Gastronomy or Geology? The Role of Nationalism in the Reconstruction of Nations*, in: *Nations and Nationalism* 1 (1995), no. 1, pp. 3–23, here pp. 18 f.; Assmann, *Cultural* (see note 14), pp. 127–129.

17 Rampley, *Contested Histories* (see note 14), p. 6.

18 Lowenthal, *Fabricating Heritage* (see note 16), pp. 5–7.

19 John Carman, Marie Louise Stig Sørensen: *Heritage Studies: An Outline*, in: *Ibidem* (eds.): *Heritage Studies: Methods and Approaches*, London et al. 2008, pp. 11–28, here pp. 18 f.

times display a style akin to Nazi rhetoric. Hein has even called it “a book with gunpowder” and “the second act of the War of Independence”, with Pirang, this talented publicist, as the general.<sup>20</sup> I aim to show that, with his book, Pirang operated in what we would today call heritage studies, rather than art history in the strict sense.

### Baltic German approaches to their material culture

The towns and the rural manors were embassies of West European culture in this borderland, and yet the manors were undoubtedly rooted also in the native culture.<sup>21</sup> Situated in this corner of Europe, cut off from the rest of German civilization, the culture of the Baltic area and especially its Baltic German community has sometimes been called uniquely isolated up to the late 19th century. Due to the geographical location and the specific conditions created by the Baltic Private Law (*Baltisches Privatrecht*),<sup>22</sup> the Biedermeier mentality tended to maintain its effect longer in the area. The withdrawal to the safety of home might at times be seen as an escapist gesture, but at the same time the art of the era displays grand panoramas of local sights and nature as well as an inherent Estophilia/Lettophilia,<sup>23</sup> and these are certainly connected with a patriotic agenda and the *Kulturträger* narrative.<sup>24</sup>

It would seem safe to assume that the old Baltic German families had always felt a natural attachment to the area's medieval architecture. Yet, the historiography presents several examples, both by travelling German authors and the local nobility themselves, that openly condemned Livonian medieval ruins, either based on their poor appearance, or, curiously, because they were seen as indirect representations of serfdom.<sup>25</sup>

20 During the discussion of my paper Sissevaateid Balti mõisate historiograafiase [Insights into the historiography of Baltic manors]: Heinz Pirang ja *Das baltische Herrenhaus*, 27th November 2019 at the Tallinn City Archives. Notes by K. J.

21 See Krista Kodres: Rahvuslik identiteet ja selle vorm. Sada aastat otsinguid [National identity and its form: A hundred years of searching], in: *Akadeemia* 6 (1995), pp. 1136-1161; Ants Hein: Hüljatud mõisad [Ghost manors of Estonia], Tallinn 1996, p. 22; Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann: Baltic Reflections, in: *Baltic Journal of Art History* 9 (2015), pp. 11-22, here pp. 18, 20.

22 See Marju Luts-Sootak: Das Baltische Privatrecht von 1864/65 – Triumphbogen oder Grabmal für das römische Recht im Baltikum, in: *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung* 58 (2009), no. 3, pp. 357-378.

23 These are common terms for the Baltic Germans' and other outward interest in the local native culture since early 19th century, even as prerequisites for the national “awakening” of the Estonians and Latvians; see e.g. Ea Jansen: Vaateid eesti rahvusluse sünniaegadesse [Insights into the birth period of ethnic Estonian nationalism], [Tartu] 2004; Ulrike Plath: Esten und Deutsche in den baltischen Provinzen Russlands: Fremdheitskonstruktionen, Lebenswelten, Kolonialphantasien, 1750–1850, Wiesbaden 2011, pp. 163-173.

24 Tiina Abel: Thinking of Baltic Biedermeier, in: *Eesti Kunstimuseumi toimetised / Proceedings of the Art Museum of Estonia* (2011), vol. 1 (6), pp. 15-24, here pp. 20 f. See also Hein, *Eesti mõisaarhitektuur* (see note 8), pp. 16 f.; Kristina Jõekalda: Baltic Heritage and Picturesque Ruins: Visual Art as a Means of ‘Inventing’ the Local, in: *Eesti Kunstimuseumi toimetised / Proceedings of the Art Museum of Estonia* (2015), vol. 5 (10), pp. 437-462, here p. 452.

25 Ulrike Plath: *Heimat*: Rethinking Baltic German Spaces of Belonging, in: *Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi / Studies on Art and Architecture* 23 (2014), no. 3/4, pp. 55-78, here pp. 74 f.

Such critical views went through a gradual shift in the course of the 19th century. The discussions over the need to valorize local heritage often came down to the noble duty of a *Kulturnation* to take care of its material past. But awareness was nonetheless not as high as one would have liked to imagine. Pirang himself made repeated calls about the need for more *Denkmalpropaganda*.<sup>26</sup> As early as 1887 Wilhelm Neumann, architect, art historian and spokesperson of the field of heritage preservation, introduced his monograph on the local history of art with the words:

“möge es, wenn auch in der Behandlung des Stoffes manches noch zu wünschen übrig bleibt, seinen Weg in die Öffentlichkeit nehmen und wenigstens den Zweck erfüllen, die allgemeine Kenntnis unserer Kunstdenkmäler zu erweitern und dazu helfen, den Sinn für die Erhaltung und den Schutz der Werke unserer Vorfahren in den weitesten Kreisen zu fördern.”<sup>27</sup>

What about more contemporary surroundings that the manor houses of the 18th century and later represented? How were those relatively recent additions to the landscape addressed, and how was their value communicated? In the eyes of the growing discipline of art history, focused on old masterpieces, something so mundane as dwellings and family estates was usually considered out of the discipline's range. They were too recent for a long historical perspective to be applied to them.<sup>28</sup> The same was true of heritage preservation: it was Pirang who introduced Alois Riegl's definition of monuments in the Baltic area, according to which at least sixty years should have passed since their construction as a prerequisite for protecting them.<sup>29</sup> Newer buildings might have been researched by critics or ethnographers, but seldom by professional (art) historians.

The history of private estates certainly benefited from genealogical research that gained popularity around the turn of the century, providing a strong link between the contemporary world and the heritage of past centuries even for those who lacked an art-historical interest in those buildings. Furthermore, as far as the German-language scholarship is concerned, this ancestral pride bore a more and more direct connection to the quality of 'Germanness'

26 Heinz Pirang: *Denkmalpflege*, in: *Arbeiten des Ersten Baltischen Historikertages zu Riga 1908*, Riga 1909, pp. 219-228, here pp. 225-228. See Kristina Jõekalda: *Monuments as a Responsibility: Baltic German Learned Societies and the Construction of Cultural Heritage around 1900*, in: *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung / Journal of East Central European Studies* 68 (2019), no 2, pp. 189-222, p. 212.

27 Wilhelm Neumann: *Grundriss einer Geschichte der bildenden Künste und des Kunstgewerbes in Liv-, Est- und Kurland vom Ende des 12. bis zum Ausgang des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Reval 1887, p. VI.

28 See Kristina Jõekalda: *Art History in Nineteenth-Century Estonia? Scholarly Endeavours in the Context of an Emerging Discipline*, in: *Kunsteiaduslikke Uurimusi / Studies on Art and Architecture* 24 (2015), no. 3/4, pp. 115-143.

29 Heinz Pirang: *Die gesetzliche Regelung der Denkmalpflege*, in: *Arbeiten des Zweiten Baltischen Historikertages zu Reval 1912*, Reval 1932, pp. 173-182, here p. 177. See also Mārtiņš Mintauris: *Arhitektūras pieminekļu saglabāšana Latvijā, 19. gadsimta 2. puse – 1940. gads* [Protection of architectural heritage in Latvia: 2nd half of the 19th century – 1940], Diss., Latvijas Universitāte, Rīga 2008, especially pp. 96 f., 131-138. Available: E-resource Repository of the University of Latvia, [https://dspace.lu.lv/dspace/bitstream/handle/7/4867/36167-Martins\\_Mintauris\\_2008.pdf?sequence=1](https://dspace.lu.lv/dspace/bitstream/handle/7/4867/36167-Martins_Mintauris_2008.pdf?sequence=1) [accessed: 30th August 2019].

of this heritage in those heated years before the First World War. In 1911, for instance, Neumann wrote:

“Die Denkmäler der Kunst und der Kultur sind die Zeugen der geschichtlichen Vergangenheit unserer Heimat. Der Zweck ihrer Pflege ist, das Bewusstsein unserer Zusammengehörigkeit mit dem heimatlichen Boden, dem sie entsprossen sind, und das Andenken an die Vorfahren aufrecht und lebendig zu erhalten [...]”<sup>30</sup>

It is in the nature of ‘heritage’ to bring along questions of responsibility and belonging that touch upon cultural identity, but that also raise highly practical, financial and above all legal considerations.<sup>31</sup> Even if the material past was therefore intertwined with the rising interest in history and one’s ancestors, several examples show that maintaining the Baltic material past was not always self-evident to the German-speaking community. The learned societies made attempts at stimulating cultural interest both via direct and indirect measures, from publications about the art historical value of the sights to consultations and financial aid to estate owners.<sup>32</sup> Especially the latter had a visible effect. Whereas in the early days the learned societies had been composed primarily of *literati*, such measures considerably increased the number of nobility members in their ranks (which also included the owners of monuments) around the turn of the century.<sup>33</sup>

All-Russian regulations about heritage conservation had no power over the property of manor estates.<sup>34</sup> When working with the draft for a heritage law around the turn of the century, the GGA in Riga strongly favored including private property under the jurisdiction, but they could not afford to count on patriotic motives alone. Sometimes the considerations (or the ill-hidden strategies behind making those considerations credible) could be very pragmatic indeed. In 1906 the intellectual circles, including the owners, were addressed in a public call, where the GGA combined practical and ideological considerations in trying to convince them of the need for such legislation. According to the argument, the owners would not object once they realized the true patriotic meaning and civilizing responsibility of such a law, and, furthermore, might even profit from it in material terms. Well-maintained monuments could allegedly prove highly rewarding financially if one took advantage of the increasing tourist traffic and charged admission fees.<sup>35</sup>

30 Wilhelm Neumann: Merkbüchlein zur Denkmalpflege auf dem Lande, Riga 1911, p. 7.

31 See e.g. Marie Louise Stig Sørensen, John Carman: Introduction: Making the Means Transparent: Reasons and Reflections, in: *Ibidem* (eds.), *Heritage Studies* (see note 19), pp. 3-9; Hubert Locher: The Idea of Cultural Heritage and the Canon of Art, in: *Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi / Studies on Art and Architecture* 23 (2014), no. 3/4, pp. 20-35, here pp. 20 f., 33-35.

32 See *Verhandlungen der Gesellschaft für Geschichte und Altertumskunde der Ostseeprovinzen Russlands, betreffend die Organisierung der Denkmalpflege*, Riga 1906, p. 5; Eugen von Nottbeck: *Ueber Massnahmen zur Erhaltung der alten Baudenkmäler in den baltischen Provinzen*, in: *Aus den Arbeiten des X. archäologischen Congresses zu Riga 1896, Riga 1898*, pp. 52-54; Önnepalu, *Klaasveranda* (see note 9).

33 For more details see Jõekalda, *Monuments* (see note 26), pp. 206-208.

34 Ants Hein: On the Early History of the Restoration and Protection of Architectural Landmarks in Estonia, in: *Centropa* 7 (2007), no. 1, pp. 20-31, here p. 23; A.[arne] M.[ichaël] T.[allgren]: Die Denkmalpflege in Estland, in: *Eurasia Septentrionalis Antiqua I* (1927), pp. 130-138, here p. 130.

35 *Verhandlungen* (see note 32), p. 13.

It is not to be forgotten that just before that publication, during the Russian Revolution of 1905 and early 1906, numerous manors had been plundered and burned. This is an essential point both in strictly architectural terms and from the point of view of the attitudes of the local ethnic communities towards the ruling classes and their representative buildings. According to different calculations, 16-40% of all the manor houses in the area were severely damaged, many of them destroyed completely.<sup>36</sup> After the turmoil, a great number were rebuilt, either as close or absolute reconstructions of their previous state, or as something completely different. Some were reconstructed in a style as 'outrageous' as Art Nouveau, often being the first ones to introduce such contemporaneity in the countryside.<sup>37</sup>

Then, in 1919, months before the constitution of the new state was declared, the radical Land Reform Act came into force, with which 97% of the grand estates were nationalized: the land of 1065 manors was distributed among some 56,000 new farmsteads over the next years.<sup>38</sup> With many Baltic Germans emigrating and their estates being given a new function, the preservation of these sights was no longer a personal responsibility for anyone, no longer something 'natural' in the self-evident sense that the Baltic German families had seen it to be (and often not even they, as the examples above serve to demonstrate). With the 1939 *Umsiedlung*, nearly all of the Baltic Germans left the area. At the border, valuable art works and pieces of furniture were confiscated, exceptions sometimes being made of those with particular family value, but many of the collections thus gathered were destroyed in the bombings, while some were returned to their emigrant owners during the Nazi German occupation.<sup>39</sup>

### **The GGA and *Das baltische Herrenhaus*: A national archive?**

This was the historical context under which Pirang's three-volume book was published. Curiously, there were no thorough accounts of Baltic manor architecture prior to the 1920s, by which time the social conditions had completely changed and the German-speaking community began looking at its heritage anew. How were these issues of the ownership and value of the manors addressed in the book itself? Although his attitude was tinged

36 See Raun, *Revolution*, pp. 456-459, 464-466; Mati Raal: *Mõisate kadunud hiilgus: Eesti mõisainterjööride lugu* [Estonian manors' bygone glory: The history of Estonian manors' interiors], Viimsi 2016, p. 339; Hein, *Hüljatud* (see note 21), p. 23. See Toomas Karjahärm: *Gewalt in Estland im Jahr 1905: Ursachen und Erscheinungsformen*, in: *Nordost-Archiv XXII* (2013), pp. 140-174. For more on the context of an 'unwanted heritage' see Jõekalda, *Heritage, Patrimony* (see note 4), p. 192.

37 See Hein, *Eesti mõisaarhitektuur* (see note 8).

38 See Tiit Rosenberg: *Künnivaod. Uurimusi Eesti 18.–20. sajandi agraarajaloost* [Ploughing furrows: Studies in the agrarian history of Estonia in 18th–20th centuries], Tartu 2013; Tiit Rosenberg: *Zur estnischen Agrarreform von 1919 in der Geschichtsschreibung*, in: *Nationale und ethnische Konflikte in Estland und Lettland während der Zwischenkriegszeit, Lüneburg 2009*, pp. 25-44.

39 Ella Vende: *Idamissiooni lõpp* [The end of the Eastern mission, 1975], in: *Tuna 4* (2003), pp. 67-84, here pp. 72-75; *Ibidem*: *Kunstiväertusi päästmas 1978*, in: Lembit Lauri (ed.): *Kirjutamata memuaare. Katkendeid kaasaegsete elukroonikast helilindil*, vol. 1, Tallinn 1986, pp. 86-98. See Olev Liivik, Tõnis Liibek (eds.): *Viimane peatükk. Baltisakslaste lahkumine Eestist 1939–1941 / Das letzte Kapitel. Die Umsiedlung der Deutschbalten 1939–1941*, [Tallinn] 2019.



with melancholy, Pirang recognized the positive aspects of writing about manors from a retrospective point of view:

“Dieser Bautypus ist ein besonders dankbares Objekt für eine derartige Untersuchung. [...] Wir kennen den Anfang, den Aufstieg, die Blütezeit und den Niedergang der Entwicklungslinie, die offen vor uns liegt und abgeschlossen ist.”<sup>40</sup>

Published in the early years of the nation-states of Estonia and Latvia, the book rather obviously adopted an ideological standpoint. The preface, signed collectively by the GGA, begins with these sentences:

“Das einst deutsche Gesicht der baltischen Landschaft droht endgültig verwischt zu werden. Den Mittelpunkt deutscher Kulturarbeit auf dem flachen Lande ist durch die Umwälzungen, die der Weltkrieg im Gefolge hatte, das Leben abgeschnürt worden, von wo es durch die Jahrhunderte ausstrahlte [...]. Die Wahrzeichen dieses Kulturlebens, die weitragenden Gutshäuser, die der Landschaft das Gepräge galten, sind dem Untergang geweiht. Sie gehen ihm entgegen durch stetigen Verfall, den kein noch so trefflich organisierter Denkmalschutz des Staats, keine Opferwilligkeit Einzelner aufzuhalten vermag. Zu groß ist die Zahl der Objekte, zu stattlich die Größe des einzelnen Baudenkmals.”<sup>41</sup>

Pirang was essentially the editor of the publication; he had several *Mitarbeiter* in the preparation process,<sup>42</sup> whom he thanks at length. It is difficult to distinguish between their specific contributions to the book, but Pirang seems to have been the main ideologue behind the juicier parts. The three-volume book was published as the first of a projected new series titled *Baltische Baudenkmäler*; no further publications followed.<sup>43</sup>

The book originated from a photo archive of manors assembled by Baron Friedrich Wolff, a livestock inspector, beginning in the 1910s. In 1924 a photographic exhibition of rural architecture was inaugurated by the GGA in Riga, mostly comprising Baltic German manors. The next year it was also displayed in Tallinn (Reval) and Tartu (Dorpat). Wolff planned the volume *Baltische ländliche Bauten* on its basis, for which subscriptions had already been collected, when it was transformed into *Das baltische Herrenhaus* project instead.<sup>44</sup> Despite the lavish illustrations, the latter is by no means merely a picture album. It is not intended or easily usable as a tourist guidebook either, although it does bear several traits of an encyclopedic account.

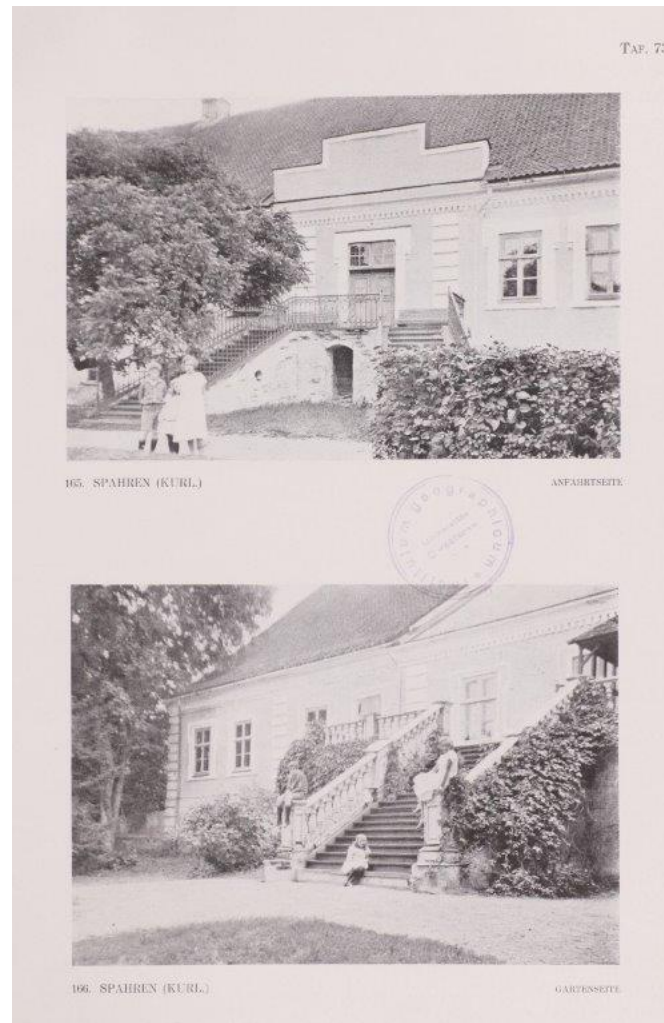
40 Pirang, *Herrenhaus* (see note 5), vol. 1, p. 15.

41 Zum Geleit, in: Pirang, *Herrenhaus* (see note 5), vol. 1, p. not numbered.

42 For details see *ibidem*, p. 4; [Vorwort], in: Pirang, *Herrenhaus*, vol. 2, Riga 1928, p. not numbered; Arnold Feuereisen: Vorwort, in: Pirang, *Herrenhaus* (see note 5), vol. 3, p. not numbered.

43 Although the name of the planned vol. 2, *Das Stadtbild Revals*, is mentioned, see Pirang, *Herrenhaus* (see note 5), vol. 1, p. 3.

44 ‘Baltische ländliche Bauten’ – ‘Das Baltische Herrenhaus’, in: *Revaler Bote*, 15th April 1925, no. 82. This advertising text is surprisingly descriptive, containing none of the emotional outbursts that *Das baltische Herrenhaus* itself is full of.



Ill. 2: Spāre (Spahren) manor in Courland, originally from the 1790s, burned in 1905, reconstructed by the von Grothus (Grotthuß) family who owned it until 1939. Here as shown in Heinz Pirang: *Das baltische Herrenhaus*, vol. 1, Riga 1926, Tafel 73.

The publisher's preface is a format prone to grand words and therefore deserves to be looked at by itself. I find particular interest in the first volume that devotes much more space than the others to explaining and justifying the need for such an undertaking. The brief one-page preface of 1926 indeed contains essential arguments for understanding the specific background of this project, as well as the more general threats that the Baltic German community thought it was facing. As the preface stated, the GGA dared to tackle the subject by creating the *Baltisches Denkmäler-Archiv* along with the publication series that would be



Ill. 3: Asu (Assuma) manor near Koorküla (Korküll) in Livonia, belonging to the von Stryk family, destroyed. The photo, which Pirang calls *ein köstliches Stimmungsbild aus grossväterlicher Zeit*, dates from ca. 1860. Reproduced from Heinz Pirang: *Das baltische Herrenhaus*, vol. 3, Riga 1930, pp. 1, 9.

“getragen von dem Heimatsinn und dem liebevollen Verständnis aller baltischen Heimatgenossen im Lande und weit draußen.”<sup>45</sup>

The book seems to be addressed to a wide circle of intellectual readers. The preface asked for contributions to the archive under formation from all those who cherished Baltic art and culture. Families as keepers of heritage were not specifically named in this connection. It was evidently also a self-affirming step on behalf of the GGA to maintain its position in the society. The GGA was allegedly deeply entangled in everyday worries about its existence and the preservation of its collections during the 1920s, and thus perhaps hoped to find support and contributors also among those who had moved to Germany or Sweden. Because the book

45 Geleit (see note 41). On the history, activity and success of the archive see Pirang, *Herrenhaus* (see note 5), vol. 1, pp. 2-4; Burchard von Ulrichen: *Das Baltische Baudenkmäler-Archiv*, in: *Zur Jahrhundertfeier der Gesellschaft für Geschichte und Altertumskunde zu Riga 1834–1934*, Riga [1934], pp. 24-28, here p. 26. See Juhan Maiste: *Eesti mõisaarhitektuur* [Estonian manor architecture], in: *Ehitus ja Arhitektuur* 1/2 (1985), pp. 39-47, here p. 45. The remaining part of Wolff's vast image archive with ca. 4600 entries is presently kept at the Herder-Institut in Marburg.

“ihnen allen ohne Unterschied der Nation und Parteirichtung damit Ansporn und neue Nahrung für ihren Heimatsinn und ihre Heimatliebe gibt. Mit diesem ersten Teil des Werks [...] legt sie ein erstes Ergebnis ihrer Bemühungen in die Hände aller Freunde und Gönner baltischer Geschichtsforschung als einen neuen Versuch das geschichtliche Bild baltischen Lebens und Wirkens wiederherzustellen, – der historischen Wahrheit zur Ehre und allen denen zu Trost und stolzer Freude, die sich in Liebe zur Heimat verzehren.”<sup>46</sup>

For the majority of those who had left the *Ostseeprovinzen* in 1918, this kind of memory-making and narrative construction was certainly needed. Namely, in parallel with *Das baltische Herrenhaus*, another massive book project, the *Genealogisches Handbuch der baltischen Ritterschaften* was prepared, the first volumes of which were published in Görlitz in 1929. The expatriates also published numerous memoirs, nostalgic card games with local sights (especially noteworthy is the *Baltisches Heimatquartett* from 1951, which curiously contained no images of manors, by Otto Pirang, an architect and cousin to Heinz Pirang), etc.<sup>47</sup>

The GGA was then headed by Arnold Feuereisen, who can probably be held responsible for the 1926 preface as well. He was always an eloquent author, also in terms of more abstract categories such as heritage and value, in times when most scholars tended to be satisfied with a descriptive style of historical writing.<sup>48</sup> In fact, Pirang ends his own foreword to the first volume by quoting Feuereisen, who had said about forming the archive that

“Jeder Balte aber sollte sich dessen bewusst sein, dass er durch Förderung dieses Unternehmens nicht nur eine ernste wissenschaftliche Aufgabe erfüllen hilft, sondern auch dazu beiträgt, der Kulturarbeit seiner Heimat und seines Volkstums ein Ehrendenkmal zu setzen.”<sup>49</sup>

In mid-19th century, John Ruskin had famously named memory one of his seven ‘lamps’ of architecture, claiming that its meaning was oriented toward the future, rather than the past.<sup>50</sup> Heritage is also a construction, rather than a reconstruction of the past: it deals with the uses of the past in the present. Pirang seems to have contemporary visions in mind as well:

“Es wird nicht nur der reinen Wissenschaft willkommene Dienste leisten, sondern auch als heimatkundliches Anschauungsmaterial der Gesamtheit unseres Volkstums zugute kommen, das allgemeine Verständnis für unsere Eigenart vertiefen und die Liebe zur Heimat festigen helfen. Das Archiv soll kein totes sein, sondern ein fruchtbringendes [sein].”<sup>51</sup>

46 Geleit (see note 41).

47 See Reet Bender: Mäng ja mälu: baltisaksa mäluaigad Otto von Pirangi kaardimängus ‘Baltisches Heimatquartett’ [Games and memory: Baltic German sites of memory in Otto Pirang’s card game ‘Baltisches Heimatquartett’ (Baltic home quartet)], in: *Õpetatud Eesti Seltsi aastaraamat / Annales Litterarum Societatis Esthonicae* (2017), Tartu 2018, pp. 44-81; Plath, *Heimat* (see note 25).

48 See also Jöekalda, *Heritage, Patrimony* (see note 4), pp. 190 f.

49 Pirang, *Herrenhaus* (see note 5), vol. 1, p. 5.

50 John Ruskin: *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, New York, NY, 1989 [1849, revised 1880], p. 186.

51 Pirang, *Herrenhaus* (see note 5), vol. 1, p. 3.

Not all the manors stood in immediate danger in the 1920s, but many did, and thus the GGA claimed in the preface that “an attempt has to be made to preserve the majestic monuments of a cultural epoch that has recently ended and now belongs to history, at least in images, in order to hand it down to posterity.”<sup>52</sup> The wider role of preserving the remains of the past had been addressed in a similar manner by Neumann who had made emotional appeals on the matter, for example in 1888 he claimed architectural monuments to be “in the fullest sense the property of the *Heimat*, the people”,<sup>53</sup> for whom they must therefore be maintained. Pirang's own foreword also refers to cultural duty and responsibility towards the next generations, both as citizens and scholars. He admits that compiling the planned archive will take decades and insists there is no time to waste:

“Jedes Jahr untätigen Wartens bringt Verluste, die wir nicht verantworten können. Wir müssen unverzüglich mit dem Sammeln beginnen [...]. Eine unerlässliche Voraussetzung für gedeihliches Arbeiten ist das verständnisvolle Verhalten unserer ganzen Gesellschaft und deren opferwillige Teilnahme in einer so wichtigen Angelegenheit unseres baltischen Volkstums.”<sup>54</sup>

One must admit that Pirang's book does not really qualify as an encyclopedia, being much too detailed and theoretical for that, while it is not simply a scholarly humanities survey book, either. Perhaps the most apt definition for the whole book would be a commented archive. This would also explain the extremely detailed descriptions of project management, selection of illustrations etc. in the forewords. This greater goal had become even clearer by 1930, when Feuereisen wrote in his foreword to the third volume:

“Aber einen wie bescheidenen Anteil an der deutschen Kunstleistung man ihr [i.e. Baltic art and culture; K. J.] auch immer zugestehen mag, ihre Bedeutung erweist sich darin, dass sie an der Grenzscheide westeuropäischen Kulturgebiets sich nicht nur den Zusammenhang mit ihren Ursprüngen ununterbrochen bewahrte, sondern auch echte Bodenständigkeit gewann. Auch unter dem Wechsel ihr bald mehr bald weniger wesensfeindlicher Fremdherrschaften vermochte sie daher die steten Einflüsse von West und Ost immer wieder zur Bereicherung ihrer Eigenart und zu voller Entfaltung ihres Wesens umzugestalten. [...] Und wenn sich dieses Werk insbesondere auch an die Heimatgenossen zu Hause und weit draußen in aller Welt wendet, so soll es in dem Sinne geschehen, wie *Georg Dehio*, der große Meister der deutschen Kunstgeschichte, uns bei der Beschäftigung mit der deutschen Kunst in ihr etwas finden lehrt, was keine fremde, auch die vollkommenste nicht, uns bieten kann: uns selbst.”<sup>55</sup>

52 Geleit (see note 41).

53 Wilhelm Neumann: Die Erhaltung unserer Denkmäler, in: *Baltische Monatsschrift* 35 (1888), pp. 351-359, here p. 354.

54 Pirang, *Herrenhaus* (see note 5), vol. 1, p. 2.

55 Feuereisen, *Vorwort* (see note 42).

### Pirang's approach to manors and architecture as a whole

The grand words do not stop there. Pirang's book is indeed a monograph on a vanished world, and sentimentality is evident throughout his text. This does not mean, however, that the book is lacking in scholarly qualities, even if it does get repetitive and somewhat emotional at times. Pirang highlights his case as follows:

“Über die kulturellen Leistungen unsres baltischen Adels ist viel geschrieben worden – pro et contra [...]. Wir wollen einmal im Bilde die Steine reden lassen und unvoreingenommen und leidenschaftslos die baukünstlerische Schöpfung des baltischen Landadels, wie sie uns im Herrenhaus entgegen tritt, näher prüfen.”<sup>56</sup>

Pirang was fifty years old at the time of the first volume's publication, and, having taught art history for some time, he had formulated his own ideas about local history of architecture in general that he evidently wanted to share – perhaps even as a summary of his life's work. At the beginning of each volume an index of manors (*Güterverzeichnis*) is provided. The chapters do not merely provide descriptive accounts of particular manors, however, but accompany the annotations with long theoretical discussions of the roles and essence of architecture in general from the earliest times, and the historical conditions that enabled certain forms to develop. His five-page foreword in volume 1 (much shorter and more technical in the next volumes) is followed by chapters with telling titles: *Baudenkmäler als Urkunden*, *Das Problem des Hauses und die Architekturgeschichte*, and *Das baltische Gutsgebäude*, and some more descriptive ones thereafter. In fact, the book is untypically contextualizing in nature compared to most others published at the time,<sup>57</sup> discussing the overall necessity of such a study as well as the very task of writing architectural history.

Pirang saw the whole history of Baltic architecture as a three-fold narrative: the age of construction (ca. 1200–1550) followed by ages of destruction (ca. 1550–1721) and rebuilding (1721–1914).<sup>58</sup> This last epoch, following the Great Northern War, constitutes the focus of the manor book. He divides that phase of rebuilding again in three, devoting the volumes about manors to the stages of his new periodisation of architectural development accordingly: 1) *Die älteste Zeit bis um 1750* that he refers to as *Wiederaufbau*, *Neubau von Grund* (Baroque); 2) *Die Blütezeit um 1800* (Rococo, Classicism); and 3) *Die neuere Zeit seit 1850*, interpreting it largely as one of *Stillstand* (revival styles, Art Nouveau).<sup>59</sup>

One ought not to expect such a general narrative in a monograph on manor houses at all. Indeed, most handbooks had a brief introduction of one page. This one has forewords, prefaces and a long introduction, plus it continues discussion of the principal topics and meanings in the following chapters. He writes about cultural history and heritage in a much

56 Pirang, *Herrenhaus* (see note 5), vol. 1, p. 16.

57 See also Krista Kodres: Freedom from Theory? An Attempt to Analyse Sten Karling's Views on (Estonian) Art History, in: *Journal of Art Historiography* 3 (2010), pp. 1-17, [http://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/02/media\\_183177\\_en.pdf](http://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/02/media_183177_en.pdf) [accessed: 29th August 2019].

58 *Zeitalter des Aufbaus, der Zerstörungen und des Wiederaufbaus*, see Pirang, *Herrenhaus* (see note 5), vol. 1, p. 10.

59 Pirang, *Herrenhaus* (see note 5), vol. 1, p. 12.

broader context than the history of mansions. On the one hand, this has to do again with the publication date of Pirang's volumes, which apparently left him in no doubt that the whole essence of Baltic culture had to be compressed into them. On the other, there was the responsibility of a scholar that he himself referred to. Even beyond manor architecture, there was not much to rely on: Pirang's book is the first – and remained the only – attempt to write the history of art of all three Baltic provinces after Neumann's 1887 monograph *Grundriss einer Geschichte der bildenden Künste und des Kunstgewerbes in Liv-, Est- und Kurland vom Ende des 12. bis zum Ausgang des 18. Jahrhunderts*.<sup>60</sup> Pirang writes:

“Eine Darstellung der baltischen Architekturgeschichte unter Beobachtung der heutigen Trennungslinie wäre daher ein Unding und könnte nur in Bezug auf die Bauernhausentwicklung gelten. Die ganze kirchliche und profane Baukunst hüben und drüben zeigt ein durchaus einheitliches Gepräge [...]”<sup>61</sup>

Looking at different types of buildings, Pirang elaborates,

“tritt das Gesamtbild der ganzen Architektur eines Landes deutlicher in die Erscheinung, und die inneren Zusammenhänge zwischen Bauform und Kulturform offenbaren sich in ihrer beziehungsreichen Mannigfaltigkeit. Die Werke der Baukunst werden damit zu monumentalen Verkörperungen des Kulturwillens bestimmter Zeitalter. *Baudenkmäler sind Kultursymbole*.”<sup>62</sup>

Although he is clearly well acquainted with international research in the field, he does not associate his interpretations with any theoreticians' approaches. To what extent could his idea of *Kulturwillen* be connected with Alois Riegl's notion of *Kunstwollen*, for example, the artistic volition of a community that also encompassed the creative will of individuals? Pirang had certainly read some writings by Riegl and held them in high regard.<sup>63</sup> Pirang goes on to mention a *Kollektivwollen*:

“Der Architekt als Gestalter ist nicht frei in seinem Wollen und Schaffen, er ist letzten Endes ein ausführendes Organ im Auftrage der sozial gegliederten Allgemeinheit. [...] Weder ein Architekt hat sie je frei aus seiner Phantasie heraus erfunden oder gefunden, noch hat sie ein Bauherr je verlangt. Sie sind entstanden als das Ergebnis der organischen Gebundenheit alles baukünstlerischen Schaffens an die Lebensbedürfnisse der menschlichen Gesamtheit. Die Bautypen verschiedenster Art sind allmählich geworden als Niederschlag eines durch Generationen hindurch wirkenden Kollektivwollens, wie es sozial im Zeitalter bedingt ist. Jede soziale Schicht der menschlichen Gesellschaft hat das ihr angemessene Bauprogramm für den ihr zukommenden Haustypus. Je klarer und ausgesprochener die Eigenart einer Gesellschaftsklasse, je einheitlicher die Lebens- und Arbeitsweise, die Sitte und die Ge-

60 Neumann, *Grundriss* (see note 27).

61 Pirang, *Herrenhaus* (see note 5), vol. 1, p. 2.

62 *Ibidem*, p. 7.

63 He refers to Riegl in e.g. Pirang, *Regelung* (see note 29), p. 177.

sinnung bei den verschiedenen Angehörigen dieser Klasse, umso bestimmter das Bauprogramm und umso gleichartiger das 'Haus'. Aus der Reinheit des Haustypus kann man auf Rassigkeit der Gesellschaftsklasse schließen. Das gilt besonders in Bezug auf zwei Haustypen, auf das Bauernhaus und auf das Herrenhaus."<sup>64</sup>

At first sight, collective memory might seem to be a far-fetched notion in the study of interwar debates, but in fact the Estonian state heritage inspector in the 1930s, Eerik Laid, asserts quite clearly: "Local history carries the same meaning for the members of a society as family tradition carries for an individual."<sup>65</sup> Although similarities can be found, it remains to be determined whether Pirang or his colleagues had any knowledge of Émile Durkheim's or Maurice Halbwachs's concepts of a collective consciousness and identity. Further parallels could be detected with the ideas of *Völkerpsychologie*, especially with Heinrich Wölfflin's concept of *Architekturpsychologie*.<sup>66</sup> What can be said is that Pirang is essentially writing a social history of architecture (which became a full-fledged approach only in the post-World War II years<sup>67</sup>), undoubtedly seeing social classes as the determining forces of architectural decisions.

Families, owners and the provenance history are briefly addressed, one by one, in encyclopedic annotations in the chapters *Zur Gütergeschichte* in each volume, which ignore architecture. In Pirang's own accounts, strictly generalizing tendencies are discussed. Olev Suuder has suggested that Pirang's "choice of objects was influenced by the academic opinion of local aristocratic families regarding historical and art monuments, and thus only well-known manors made it onto the list".<sup>68</sup> My reading does not quite confirm this, given that Pirang's judgement does not conform to a standard set of values. In addition to his general reinterpretations of the nature of architecture and periodization of Baltic architecture, he incorporates many wooden manors in the book, for example, that in later research tend to be backgrounded.<sup>69</sup> It even seems as if the families have been written out of his general narrative intentionally, possibly because he does not consider their inclusion to be scientific in art-historical terms, or simply because the focus of his text is on the formal features of the structures and their wider cultural significance.

To me it seems that he thereby interprets the buildings through the lens of heritage, rather than of art history. Heritage is about the wider reception of those monuments, beyond their artistic value in the eyes of those who cherish culture anyway. Given the ideological

64 Pirang, *Herrenhaus* (see note 5), vol. 1, p. 8.

65 Eerik Laid: Muinsuskaitse pedagoogilise tegurina [Heritage protection as a pedagogical factor], in: *Eesti Kool* 1 (1938), pp. 15-22, here p. 19. See Pierre Nora: *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire*, in: *Representations* 26 (1989), pp. 7-24, here p. 9; Lowenthal, *Fabricating Heritage* (see note 16), pp. 10 f., 16.

66 Heinrich Wölfflin: *Prolegomena zu einer Psychologie der Architektur*, München 1886; Geleit (see note 41).

67 See Arnold, *Reading* (see note 14).

68 Olev Suuder: *Inventory of Manors – Future of the Past*, in: *Baltic Journal of Art History* 3 (2011/2012), pp. 80-84, here p. 80.

69 See e.g. Elis Pärn: *Puitmõisad Põhja-Eestis 18. sajandist 20. sajandi alguseni* [Wooden manor houses in northern Estonia from the 18th century to the early 20th century], BA thesis, University of Tartu, Tartu 2018, pp. 4-7. Available: [Universitas Tartuensis DSpace, http://hdl.handle.net/10062/60624](http://hdl.handle.net/10062/60624) [accessed: 30th August 2019].



difficulties of writing about those monuments at that specific moment, with rapid changes to the physical objects themselves and a flow of reinterpretations in approaching them over only a couple of decades, it is no wonder that such a path was chosen for the manor book. What 'heritage' also does is to make the political aspects of the topic more visible, and this was evident to Pirang as well:

“Die Architekturgeschichte ist ein getreues Spiegelbild der Schicksalsgeschichte des Landes. Je vielgestaltiger und bewegter die Vergangenheit, umso beziehungsreicher – aber dadurch zugleich auch schwerer deutbar – ist die Sprache der baulichen Urkunden.”<sup>70</sup>

Yet Pirang does not attribute this quality to all extant buildings. He creates his own hierarchies. He is indeed interested in the formal qualities of the buildings, but in his eyes the value of a work of architecture lies in its ability to truly capture the historical moment of its making:

“wenn das Bauwerk als Ergebnis geistiger Triebkräfte innerhalb einer Kulturperiode gewürdigt wird [...], dann erst gewinnen die Baudenkmäler der Vergangenheit urkundlichen Wert, dann erst wird der leblose Stein, den Menschenhand ins Bauwerk fügte, zum beredten Zeugen einer entschwundenen Zeit.”<sup>71</sup>

Beyond doubt, his candidate for the most successful such attempt was the Baltic manor house, starting with the historical and social points of view:

“tonangebend für die zeitgemäße Formgestaltung [...] ist das vornehme Wohnhaus der sozialen Oberschicht, der feudale Landsitz des Adels. Die noch heute gültigen Regeln des guten Tones im gesellschaftlichen Verkehr sind in diesem aristokratischen Wohnhaus des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts entstanden. Die höchst differenzierten Wohnansprüche einer verfeinerten Gesellschaftskultur haben in vollendeter Form ihren künstlerischen Ausdruck gefunden im ‘Herrenhaus’. [...] Dieser Bautypus ist das bevorzugte Problem, der erklärte Liebling der vielen Architekturtheoretiker jener Zeit und ist ohne Zweifel deren ausdrucksvollstes Kultursymbol.”<sup>72</sup>

Pirang goes on to prove that the mansions personified the 'Baltic' essence in their form as well:

“Welche Bauformen sind es, die wir als ‘echtbaltisch’ empfinden? Welche Stilart ist es, die in den vielen Tausenden von schönen Baudenkmalern, den Wohnhäusern in der Stadt, den ‘Höfchen’ und den Herrenhäusern uns so altertümlich anmutet, uns anheimelt? Welche Stilform ist im Gesamtbild die tonangebende, die durch die Zahl der Beispiele sämtliche anderen weitaus übertreffende?”<sup>73</sup>

70 Pirang, *Herrenhaus* (see note 5), vol. 1, p. 7.

71 *Ibidem*, p. 7.

72 *Ibidem*, p. 8.

73 *Ibidem*, p. 15.

The answer to his question is, not surprisingly, the manor houses, and especially those built from ca. 1750 to 1850, the *Blütezeit*. This period was crucial to determining not only the character of architecture, as Pirang puts it, but also the cultural essence of *Baltentum* as a whole.<sup>74</sup> While Neumann had paid very little attention to the 18th and 19th centuries in his groundbreaking *Grundriss* [...], Pirang calls the period following the Great Northern War an age of “beneficial peace” and “overall rise”.<sup>75</sup> Architecture of this era is

“vollkommen selbstständig. Weder ist sie deutsch, noch ist sie russisch, weder lettisch, noch estnisch oder gar schwedisch – sie hat ihre festgegründete Eigenart. Sie ist wurzelecht an die Scholle gebunden, ist bodenwüchsig – ist ‘baltisch’ geworden.”<sup>76</sup>

This could indeed be described as the biggest contribution of his monograph, albeit also the most problematic one. The idea of a Baltic *Heimat* had already emerged in the mid-19th century,<sup>77</sup> but in art history it was always the German face of local art and architecture that was highlighted, rather than the unique Baltic traits; the idea of belonging to Western civilization as its colonial offspring. This was certainly a position that needed defending in an age of Russification in the late 19th century. Pirang mentions the colonial character of medieval architecture of the area on several occasions, building on 19th-century authors who had used similar vocabulary. By the 1920s these statements had acquired further ideological significance. Seeking a specifically Baltic visual identity was not a common feature in earlier Baltic German scholarship,<sup>78</sup> but Pirang was ready to cross that line. The longest-living contribution of *Das baltische Herrenhaus* is probably its implementation of the concept of *urbaltisch*, again relating to ancestry, and more indirectly also to the justification of one’s historical right to the land. Pirang’s book quite clearly addresses a German-speaking audience, but its appeal does not depend on the language alone. All in all, the monograph served rather as a memento for the Baltic German community. By this means, the Baltic Germans and their patriotic goals could be compared in various ways with the small nations raising their heads across Europe who similarly struggled to create and preserve their symbols of a glorious past.

### **Estonian approaches and interwar debates: Coming to terms with an ‘alien’ past**

What makes the book particularly interesting is its date of publication. After the independent nation-states were declared in 1918, a large part of the Baltic German population left. New ownership automatically brought with it long discussions over how this heritage was to be adapted and assimilated. The political changes also brought about several legislative

74 Ibidem, pp. 12, 15.

75 Ibidem, p. 10.

76 Ibidem, p. 13.

77 Ibidem, p. 14; Ea Jansen: Das ‘Baltentum’, die Deutschbalten und die Esten [2005], in: *Forschungen zur baltischen Geschichte* 2 (2007), pp. 71-111, here pp. 73-80.

78 See Kristina Jõekalda: *Baltic Identity via German Heritage? Seeking Baltic German Art in the Nineteenth Century*, in: *Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi / Studies on Art and Architecture* 23 (2014), no. 3/4, pp. 79-110.

alterations. Such 'crises of time', to use historian François Hartog's term, are central to understanding heritage. Cultural monuments are by essence defined by and inseparable from social temporalities and discontinuities.<sup>79</sup> What was the general atmosphere of the 1920s in terms of historical art and architecture from the Estonian point of view? Highlighting the lineage from the colonial ancestors and defending the idea of a unique Baltic essence captured by manorial architecture might indeed have raised eyebrows at the time. But for a historian, this is the most interesting aspect of the book for this same reason.

The Estonians and Latvians did begin to seek arguments for preserving and appreciating those artworks and buildings they had now inherited, however, and this was not an ideological or intellectual challenge alone. This 'alien' heritage simply had to be appropriated in the first place for pragmatic and economic reasons: the young state lacked a national architecture of its own that could house the new administrative and representative institutions, nor could it afford to build all that right after the war – especially in the rural areas, where the manors were the most conspicuous representatives of this 'alien' heritage. After the land reform, many of the manors began to serve a public function as schools, hospitals, sanatoria, retirement homes, etc. Some were given by the state to veterans of the War of Independence.



Ill. 4: Udriku (Uddrich) manor in northern Estonia, finished in 1803, was in the possession of the von Reh binder family until nationalization. Since 1922 a care home, first for children with mental disorders (*Nõrgamõistuslike Laste Kodu*), from 1929 to 1938 for distinguished War of Independence veterans awarded the Cross of Liberty. Photo from ca. 1930. Courtesy of the Estonian Film Archives of the National Archives of Estonia (0-181144).

This did not mean, however, that the issue of an 'alien' heritage would be tolerated without public discussion. The common arguments in these debates were, firstly, that the main houses of manor complexes were among the most luxurious representatives of 'high' art

79 François Hartog: *Regimes of Historicity: Presentism and Experiences of Time*, transl. Saskia Brown, New York, NY 2015 [2003], p. 152.

in the area; secondly, that the tumult of history had lent a helping hand (after most of the Baltic Germans had left their estates it was much easier to accept them as part of one's own past); and thirdly, that due to their great number, many of the manors were in a devastatingly neglected state, drawing the attention of the civilized citizen rather than engaging merely with narrow, nationally-minded perspectives. By the time Pirang's book was published, many issues were still unsolved and often the buildings stood in a state of neglect. Moreover, the auxiliary buildings of the manor complex often became divided among several different owners.

There were obstacles, too, from the discipline of art history: the tradition of reserving more contemporary architecture for non-professional art historians continued in the inter-war years. Even though a heritage conservation act now existed, most of the manors were considered to be too recent to be protected by law; to be interpreted as heritage, in other words, and this corresponded to the international disciplinary practice of the era. Ethnographers studied vernacular architecture, but there were no scholarly accounts of new Estonian national architecture either (which was indeed hard to define), apart from some critical texts by Hanno Kompus.<sup>80</sup> Considering the national agenda of the nation-state along with its humanities, this is still somewhat surprising. One might think that the first generations of academics were simply keen on applying international standards, rather than creating new ones from scratch. Such assumptions are easy to overinterpret. Perhaps the sheer lack of specialists brought about this result instead: in a small research community, limited staffing resources may well have been just as important a reason why the more recent layers of architecture were scarcely studied.

During the preparation of the heritage conservation acts, private property rose as an issue again, prolonging the process by several years.<sup>81</sup> In Latvia the heritage conservation act took effect in 1923.<sup>82</sup> In Estonia active debates continued, culminating with the act in 1925, which claimed that all historical periods were valuable for Estonian culture but phrased the point quite curiously: all that has a "national, scientific or art-historical importance".<sup>83</sup> The 'or' is rather remarkable here. The categories of 'national' and 'scientific' did not therefore automatically include art-historical value within them; the latter was seen as a different kind of value. Although history, archaeology, ethnography, literature, were quickly termed "national sciences", in art history the task of determining the national component proved somewhat more difficult.<sup>84</sup>

80 E.g. Hanno Kompus: 20 aastat ehitamist Eestis. 1918–1938 [20 years of building in Estonia. 1918–1938], Tallinn 1939. See also Jõekalda, *Heritage, Patrimony* (see note 4).

81 Eerik Laid: Législation sur la protection des monuments historiques en Estonie, Tallinn 1937, p. 3.

82 Likums par pieminekļu aizsardzību [Law on monument protection], in: *Valdības Vēstnesis* 133 (1923), p. 1.

83 Muinasvarade kaitse seadus [Heritage protection act], in: *Riigi Teataja* 111/112 (1925), pp. 603–605, here p. 603.

84 F.[erdinand] Leinbock: Eesti rahvusteaduste areng. Tuleviku ülesanded ja nende tähtsus eesti rahvuskultuuri arendamisel [The development of national sciences: Future tasks and their importance for developing Estonian national culture], in: *Eesti rahvuskultuur*, [Tartu] (1933), pp. 51–53.

Another question is whether Pirang's 'Baltic' was supposed to mean something different from the previous Baltic German usage of the word, which nearly always referred to the Baltic Germans alone. How much did his idea of unity within the Baltic area include the local inhabitants? Early-20th-century efforts of the Baltic Germans to establish a heritage law had been unsuccessful. Now, dividing the objects between Estonian and Latvian territory and legislation brought further obstacles for art-historical monuments. Pirang does not openly criticize the current states, but he does exclaim:

“Von einer einheitlich organisierten ‘baltischen’ Denkmalpflege kann heute keine Rede mehr sein [...]. Beide Staaten betätigen sich denkmalpflegerisch nur auf ihrem Landesgebiet und verlegen den Schwerpunkt ihres Wirkens naturgemäß auf ihre völkisch-nationalen Denkmalsobjekte.”<sup>85</sup>

Buildings were often listed as protected monuments with the justification that they were without proper use and in a poor condition, but, curiously, the very same arguments were sometimes used to delete them from the list of monuments. Sometimes it was the owners themselves who asked to have their property taken off the list – at times with success.<sup>86</sup> This also testifies to the urgency and disarrangement of the early days after the heritage conservation act. In an age when photography was not yet wide-spread, monuments were often listed only on the basis of brief annotations, while the informants were not always sufficiently trained for such judgement. Study trips in the manner of a basic inventory were carried out by students of art history in the early 1920s. After 1925 the law gave this responsibility to the municipalities and to a wide assortment of correspondents who were often not particularly knowledgeable in the field, either. With the 1936 amendment, a network of trustees was developed.<sup>87</sup>

By 1936, 420 historical monuments were listed, many of them as ensembles. The manors comprised about 13% of them.<sup>88</sup> More recent architecture was particularly prone to sharp re-evaluations. During the 1930s, several of the 19th-century main houses of manors were deleted from the list with the justification that they were “too new, worthless”; and this disparagement was made by the esteemed professor of art history at the University of Tartu, the Swedish-born Sten Karling.<sup>89</sup> Evaluations varied over time, but also greatly among the specialists themselves, depending on their training, school of art history, descent, personal

85 Pirang, *Herrenhaus* (see note 5), vol. 1, p. 1.

86 As testified by documents in National Archives of Estonia, ERA.1108.5.762, pp. 8, 14: correspondence.

87 Muinasvarade kaitse seadus (see note 83); Muinasvarade kaitse seadus [Heritage protection act], in: *Riigi Teataja* 67 (1936), pp. 1489-1494.

88 Eerik Laid: Täiendatud Muinasvarade kaitse seadus [Revised Heritage protection act], in: *Ajalooline Ajakiri* 3/4 (1936), pp. 164-168, here p. 165; Laid, *Législation* (see note 81), p. 5. In late 2019 there are 26 485 monuments listed in Estonia, of which 5 273 are monuments of architecture. 45% (2 407) of all built monuments are part of manor ensembles, 283 of them the main houses (or their ruins). Comparison to ‘our own’ vernacular heritage on the list is striking: only 4% (223) represent part of a farm complex. See Statistika [Statistics], in: *Kultuurimälestiste riiklik register* [National registry of cultural monuments], s.a. <https://register.muinas.ee/public.php?menuID=statistic> [accessed: 23rd August 2019].

89 National Archives of Estonia, ERA.R-14.1.467, pp. 24-30: correspondence.

stylistic preferences and academic interests. In the tiny academic community of Estonia a single opinion often has a long-lasting effect. Many of these monuments had been listed at the suggestion of Karling's colleague at the same institute, Voldemar Vaga, whose interests centred on 19th-century architecture at the time.<sup>90</sup>

Also in terms of Classicism, the cut-off date (as a guarantee of quality) seems to have been roughly the year 1850.<sup>91</sup> This corresponded exactly to Pirang's own periodization in his monograph. Despite his overarching aim to include the whole history of Baltic manors (and Baltic architecture more broadly), Pirang was clearly less attracted to developments after the mid-19th century. What is particularly interesting is that by the 1920s, something more than 60 years had passed since then, so Pirang indeed ended up respecting Riegl's definition<sup>92</sup> to the letter.

In 1931 there had been 53 manors and 69 town dwellings protected,<sup>93</sup> but, curiously, by 1934 the number had risen to 56 in the case of manors, while the number of town dwellings had decreased to 54 for reasons unknown.<sup>94</sup> It is also sometimes difficult to assess the changes in the monument lists found at the archives because parallel versions of the ever-changing lists or its relevant parts were kept by the respective university chairs and the municipalities, while copies of the whole list for state monuments were stored at the Ministry of Education.<sup>95</sup> As a result, one cannot always determine when a particular version of the list was last updated.

Given that such rapid changes were inherent in the disciplines of art history and heritage preservation, it is hardly surprising to find similar, yet much more forthright attitudes in the daily press. Looking at discussions contemporary to Pirang's book, a remarkable newspaper article from 1925 by Ants Laikmaa, the leading painter of the Estonian national school, stands out. Laikmaa tried to reshape Estonian public opinion, defending the value of the "alien" monuments, or at least their more historical layers: "We did not inherit bare land, but manors and forests that have been constructed, preserved and grown with our efforts and sweat".<sup>96</sup>

Baltic German authors like Neumann tended often to refer to the soil on which the buildings stood, sometimes in terms evocative of the slogan *Blut und Boden* that truly came to prominence in the Nazi era. Here the settlement myths melted harmoniously together

90 E.g. Voldemar Vaga: Die Architekten der Dorpater Universität [MA theses, University of Tartu, 1926]. For a longer discussion see Kristina Jõekalda: 'Võõra' pärandiga leppimine ja lepitamine. 1920.–1930. aastate debatid ajaloolise arhitektuuri väärtuse ja kaitse üle [Coping and reconciling with the 'alien' heritage: Debates over the value and protection of historical architecture during the 1920s–1930s], in: Linda Kaljundi, Helen Sooväli-Sepping (eds.): Maastik ja mälu. Pärandilooma arengujooni Eestis [Landschaft und Erinnerung. Entwicklungstrends der Schaffung von Kulturerbe in Estland], Tallinn 2014, pp. 182–245, here pp. 205–210.

91 National Archives of Estonia, ERA.2218.1.84, pp. 1–32: Muinsuskaitsele.

92 See Pirang, *Regelung* (see note 29), p. 177.

93 G.[ottlieb] Ney: Denkmalschutz in Estland, Tallinn 1931, pp. 6 f.

94 Hariduse- ja Sotsiaalministeeriumi tegevuse ülevaade 1918–1934 [Survey of the activities of the Ministry of Education and Social Affairs, 1918–1934], Tallinn 1934, p. 9.

95 During 1929–1936 the Ministry of Education and Social Affairs. National Archives of Estonia, ERA.1108.5.371, p. 2: Muinsusnõukogu.

96 Ants Laipman [Hans Laipman]: 'Saxa loquuntur' [...], in: *Päevaleht*, 8th September 1925.

with the “right” blood in the settlers’ veins.<sup>97</sup> Such vocabulary was taken to another level in the interwar era: the same argument was used to justify the maintenance of German heritage under the Estonian nation-state. In both Alfred Vaga’s and Voldemar Vaga’s handbooks of the history of art and architecture in Estonia, the claim that the construction materials had come from ‘our’ native soil was a common argument for seeing them as part of the Estonian history of art. Moreover, they had allegedly been built by Estonian construction workers and masons.<sup>98</sup> This argument could also be turned upside down, devaluing the artistic or cultural qualities of a structure. When the demolition of Gothic revival-style Sangaste manor (Sagnitz) was discussed in the 1930s, for example, it was emphasized that its value lay in its high-quality brick- and wood-work, rather than in its external appearance or style.<sup>99</sup>

Despite promoting the “alien” heritage of the area, Laikmaa, writing in 1925, curiously still found a way to imply that the Baltic Germans’ more contemporary architecture was of course ridiculous, even degenerate. He specified, referring mostly to manors, that the problem lay not in having followed German examples, but in having done so in a crude way. Laikmaa quoted a German visitor who allegedly said, when viewing Tallinn from Laikmaa’s balcony: “What I have secretly feared, I find confirmed today: the Baltic overlords [*saksad*] lag centuries behind their motherland – *Saxa loquuntur* – the stones speak.”<sup>100</sup>

In 1935 the influential architecture critic Hanno Kompus conveniently developed this point further, asking ironically if Estonians had inherited anything at all of value from their foreign rulers. He blamed the crude appearance of local medieval architecture on the German colonizers having lacked a sense of monumentality, disregarding the fact that these had been the first stone structures in the whole area. In the case of revival styles in manor architecture, too, Kompus skilfully masked his personal stylistic and ideological preferences as professionally driven statements. He called the Baltic Germans’ (and also local Russians’) blind following of contemporary international trends a vulgarisation of noble Classicism, that spoiled it with petty Biedermeier and Romantic traits.<sup>101</sup> Nor did Kompus stop there:

“The latter half of the 19th century as a whole has brought rather hideous ‘role models’ to our land, and in this our former ‘masters’ to whom these examples belong have managed to leave behind a particularly poor and miserable memory of

97 See e.g. Robert Cecil: *The Myth of the Master Race: Alfred Rosenberg and Nazi Ideology*, London 1972, pp. 165 f.

98 E.g. Alfred Vaga: *Eesti kunsti ajalugu, 1: Keskaeg* [The history of Estonian art, 1: The Middle Ages], Tartu 1932, pp. 68-70; Voldemar Vaga: *Eesti kunst. Kunstide ajalugu Eestis keskajast meie päevini* [Estonian art: The history of arts in Estonia from the Middle Ages to the present day], Tartu et al. 1940–1941, pp. 5-8. See Jõekalda, Vööra (see note 90), pp. 212 f.

99 Sangaste loss lammutamisele [Sagnitz castle to be demolished], in: *Uus Eesti*, 28th June 1938, no. 174, p. 7. According to a newspaper article, the rooms were too dark even to consider establishing a school on the premises (Sangaste loss ei sobi koolile [Sagnitz castle not suitable for a school], in: *Rahvaleht*, 9th February 1939, no. 34, p. 3).

100 Laipman, Saxa. Cf. Elisabeth Ruge, Peter Ruge: *Nicht nur die Steine sprechen deutsch... Polens Deutsche Ostgebiete*, München et al. 1985.

101 Hanno Kompus: *Meie ehituslik pärandus* [Our built heritage], in: *Päevaleht*, 5th January 1935. See also Kristina Jõekalda: *Memories and Memorials: The Predicament of a Nation State*, in: *U: Estonian Urbanists’ Review* 18 (2016), pp. 2-9, here pp. 4-7, <http://www.urban.ee/pdf/18/U-18-en-complete.pdf> [accessed: 23rd August 2019].

themselves. [...] Benckendorff built a pink castle in Keila-Joa [Schloß Fall ...] in *soi disant* Tudor-style, of which not a single role model from the true Tudor era can be found in the whole archipelago of Great Britain. Baggo [Baggehufvudt] built a similar fake German-Gothic castle in Vasalemma [Wassalem]. Berg of Sangaste was a little luckier in his choice of architect. It is still just the external scenery, decoration [...]; the interior, however, at least in the last two cases, is downright foul and appalling.”<sup>102</sup>

Reading texts like this, one might think that the Baltic German manors were a particularly difficult kind of heritage to grow accustomed to, but in fact, correspondence in the archives proves that municipal administrations in the countryside were among the first to propose that manor houses be listed.<sup>103</sup> There were not that many sites to be considered nearby in rural areas, and perhaps the manors were seen to be in most immediate danger under the new state, while the churches, for example, continued to serve a function. Moreover, the churches had long become part of the Estonians’ protestant (Lutheran) identity;<sup>104</sup> the preservation of sacral art was hardly ever discussed from such an ideological point of view.



Ill. 5: Sangaste manor (arch. Otto Pius Hippius, designed in 1874, constructed until 1881) was commissioned by Friedrich Georg Magnus von Berg, whose family resided there until his death in 1938. Photo from ca. 1911. Courtesy of the National Archives of Estonia, Tartu (EAA.1691.1.155.25).

102 Kompus, Meie (see note 101).

103 E.g. National Archives of Estonia, ERA.1108.5.374, p. 235 f.: Harju.

104 See Tiina-Mall Kreem: Die 'sichtbare Kirche'. Der lutherische Kirchenbau in Liv- und Estland unter Alexander II., in: Forschungen zur baltischen Geschichte 6 (2011), pp. 101-119.



Considering the mockery of Baltic Germandom by the locals, which had been gradually increasing since 1905 (despite parallel tolerant voices), Pirang's statement gains additional value. The nationalization and public use of the manors must have seemed a mockery of fate to the Baltic Germans. Compared with the attitude of Estonian newspaper articles, Pirang's book can even be seen as an attempt to demonstrate the dignity of the Baltic Germans after the land reform.

On the whole, Pirang focuses on what might tentatively be called the 'national awakening' of the Baltic Germans that he dates to the late 18th and first half of the 19th centuries. That is most clearly articulated at the end of his first chapter, where he praises the Baltic Baroque:

“Das ist in tieferem Sinn überhaupt erst ‘baltische Architektur’ die wurzelständig, wie aus dem Boden erwachsen, deutsches Erbgut mit übernommenem Lehngut in sich organisch verbunden hat. [...] Diese baltische Baukunst gibt es nur einmal und kann es nur auf baltischem Boden geben. Sie ist der formgewordene Ausdruck der baltischen Kultur, die in ihrer Eigenart bestimmt wird durch die Landesgeschichte und letztlich in Beziehung gesetzt werden müsste zu den entscheidenden Ereignissen des Nordischen Krieges.”<sup>105</sup>

From the Estonian perspective on the periodization of local art history, however, it is interesting that the era that constitutes the downfall in Pirang's periodization – the latter 19th century – became the centrepiece of the national formulation of an ethnically Estonian history of art, the age of Estonian national awakening. This was first programmatically articulated in Alfred Vaga's survey book from some years later, 1932.<sup>106</sup> Yet, as regards the history of Baltic German art and architecture, and despite the many differences, Laikmaa's and Kompus's mocking tone in fact finds an echo in Pirang's text, albeit one more reserved in tone. Pirang did not praise the late-19th and early-20th-century manor architecture, either; all of them saw it as an age of decline.

In both the German- and Estonian-language press, Pirang's book met with some criticism regarding the scarceness of historical data, and perhaps also the timing of the whole undertaking.<sup>107</sup> But Estonian scholars such as Voldemar Vaga did stress the importance of Pirang's volumes for filling the gap in research on more recent architecture, a marginal field in early art-historical scholarship.<sup>108</sup>

105 Pirang, *Herrenhaus* (see note 5), vol. 1, p. 15.

106 A. Vaga, *Eesti kunsti ajalugu* (see note 98).

107 Wilhelm Bockslaff: H. Pirang, *Das Baltische Herrenhaus*, in: *Baltische Monatsschrift* (1931), pp. 59-64.

108 [Author's foreword], in: Voldemar Vaga: *Tartu ülikooli arhitektid* [The architects of the University of Tartu], Tartu 1928, p. not numbered.

### Epilogue: What deserves to be preserved, and how?

The moment chosen for the publication of Pirang's book was interesting for several reasons. One side of it is the local inhabitants' perspective. The other side of the same coin is that the new circumstances also mobilized the Baltic German community, who realized the urgent need to maintain the memory of their heritage – at least on paper. I expected to find the Baltic German familial ties in a much more prominent position in relating early historiography. I thus sought to look at the general art historical and heritage narratives, in order to detect where the family level fits in. Although I planned to concentrate on the family perspective in Pirang's book, that outstanding example of such historiography, when I delved into the actual material I was led in other directions. Manors can, no doubt, be seen as centres of family life, especially when one approaches them via genealogical histories. In architectural history, however, at least in Pirang's monograph under analysis here, they are rarely associated with belonging to or representing a particular family. Rather the manors are shown as representations of the whole Baltic identity. His book aims to testify to the wider cultural significance of manors – for all of Balticness (essentially Baltic Germandom), indeed as its essence. Those aspects are often overlooked when Pirang's monograph is referred to in subsequent scholarship: it is recognised as an extensive database, but in my opinion the book's most intriguing traits lie elsewhere. The story of cultural inheritance – or rather, patrimony, i.e. things inherited from the forefathers – with all its inherent difficulties aggravated by the twists of 20th-century history is the most interesting part of the history of manors.

Even though they were attributes of only one social class, Pirang curiously positioned the manors to represent all of Baltic Germandom – a fact which he himself understood perfectly. But the manors are not of course representative of all of Germandom or Baltic Germandom or even Baltic German architecture in the area. Yet, also in the Estonian public discourse they are often interpreted as just that – as symbols of the centuries-long oppression by German-born landlords, or, in a more positive light, as symbols of (the contribution of) German culture in the area, the *Kulturträger* narrative. The very claim of the Germanness of monuments is highly problematic,<sup>109</sup> and Pirang's idea of Baltic particularities makes the case even more intriguing. Yet the history of manors does present a case that allows one to look at the close relationship to one's material past in a manifold way, as *lieux de mémoire*.<sup>110</sup> In reality, the manors can be seen as a metaphor for the intertwined relationship of the Baltic German, Russian, and Estonian/Latvian parties. Rather than singularity, they represent complexity, a shared heritage. And, in fact, in his own way Pirang too states that:

“In diesem Bautypus kreuzen sich deutschbürtige, einheimisch-bodenständige und grenznachbarliche Elemente in organischer Verschmelzung und vollkommener Ausgeglichenheit.”<sup>111</sup>

109 See Michaela Marek: Können alte Mauern 'deutsch' sein? Zum Problem 'deutscher' Baudenkmäler in Polen zwischen Nostalgie, Politik, Wissenschaft und Denkmalpflege, in: Hans-Jürgen Karp (ed.): Deutsche Geschichte und Kultur im heutigen Polen. Fragen der Gegenstandsbestimmung und Methodologie, Marburg 1997, pp. 103-117.

110 See Nora, Memory (see note 65).

111 Pirang, Herrenhaus (see note 5), vol. 1, p. 15.

Until independent statehood was declared, the tradition carried on by Baltic German noble families in the construction and maintenance of their material property constituted a rare example in this area: the same community was able to shape the landscape over several generations. Manors inhabited by noble families gave immediate access to heritage through a direct personal connection, rather than by means of awareness-raising campaigns or by stimulating art-historical interest.

Yet, as we know, communities are inventions of the imagination. Their long, unbroken traditions are often an illusion.<sup>112</sup> Ever since the appearance of Eric Hobsbawm's studies,<sup>113</sup> much has been written about the role of historians in providing the narratives we live by. It is historians and art historians like Pirang who shape our understanding, often for decades. And he measured the quality of architecture by its ability to represent the era of its construction, because

“Die augenfällige Erscheinung eines Baudenkmals der Vergangenheit lässt uns den Rhythmus des Lebens fast greifbar deutlich nachempfinden. In den Baudenkmalern lebt die Seele der Vergangenheit.”<sup>114</sup>

My article is a historiographical analysis of this key text on Baltic manors – or rather a commentary on it. I was interested in the solutions Pirang gave to the difficult situation in this critical time – the places in the text where his approach to architecture and its potential is unveiled; where he cries out in strong emotion. There are plenty of them, as there are in the work of several of his contemporaries, both Baltic German and Estonian or Latvian, and the same is true of academic studies. Pirang wrote the kind of history book in which no doubt about the ideological implications remains; the kind that helps one realize how entangled with day-to-day politics scholarly discussions can be. It illustrates a tendency of which we should be increasingly aware today, when we are witnessing an extensive resurgence of nationalism.

At the same time, given that there was not much to choose from in terms of the history of ‘high’ culture, art history and heritage conservation were among the rare fields in the humanities of the new-born nation-states where the goals of German and Estonian scholars were not necessarily very different, or at least, where it was possible to find common ground, even if public opinion was still rather heated at times. On the one hand, despite decades of work in the social history of art and the New Art History, art history is full of such loaded terms as ‘high’ and ‘low’ art, and ‘heritage’ can be seen as a relatively democratic term among its vocabulary. On the other hand, heritage is undoubtedly an elitist phenomenon, tending to empower those who already have a privileged position.<sup>115</sup> When looking at the history of historiography and heritage construction, the approaches

112 E.g. Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (see note 15), pp. 5-7.

113 Eric Hobsbawm: Introduction: Inventing Traditions, in: *Ibidem*, Terence Ranger (eds.): *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge 1983, pp. 1-14, here pp. 12-14.

114 Pirang, *Herrenhaus* (see note 5), vol. 1, p. 8.

115 See Kristin Kuutma: Afterword: The Politics of Scale for Intangible Cultural Heritage. Identification, Ownership and Representation, in: Tuuli Lähdesmäki, Suzie Thomas et al. (eds.): *Politics of Scale: New Directions in Critical Heritage Studies*, New York, NY et al. 2019, pp. 156-170, here p. 168.

constructed and communicated by the professionals are predominant. All of those aspects also came up in Pirang's work, which can therefore effectively be seen through the lens of heritage studies, even if the field is excessively concerned with our present day rather than historical interpretations. One might even say that with his eloquent publicizing effort, his openly ideological stance, and his clear attempt to determine a unique Baltic (German) identity, Pirang is the perfect author to be analysed in the framework of 'heritage'.

Although they represent an 'alien' culture, the manors still play a prominent part in contemporary Estonia's cultural memory. Ever since the 1920s they have gained familiarity in the Estonian community. Pirang cannot probably be held responsible here alone. He wrote what was essentially an opinion piece in the style of a newspaper article, and at full monograph length; yet despite its populist aspects, his book has held an immense importance for subsequent researchers, including those opposed to his ideological standpoint.

'Heritage' can communicate interpretations more clearly than academic writing. It would be difficult to assess exactly what part Pirang's book played in effecting this reconciliation – in turning manors into a sort of a 'tamed' heritage. In terms of research on art history, it has not stood the test of time in many respects, of course. Strong re-evaluations have been made about early architecture of manors,<sup>116</sup> as well as about the later period, *vom Historismus bis zum Jugendstil*,<sup>117</sup> on which Pirang casts a rather negative light. But his evaluations have often been the point of departure and criticism for the next cohort of researchers. It remained the only comprehensive account of manors for decades, exerting an unsurpassed influence on many researchers, and one has to look upon it as such. Its value was more than that of a textual and visual overview of the *status quo* of research and the physical conditions of manors in 1920s. There is no doubt about the continued importance of this book for Estonian and Latvian researchers as a reference work, probably because the encyclopedic part is kept strictly separate from the ideologically-coloured chapters.

One could then conclude that it is not only the stones that speak; the texts are even more talkative. And in fact the material objects have little to say without the voice and knowledge of the specialists, as well as the listeners and readers. With his book, Pirang attempted to erect a last monument to Baltic German culture. It seems like stating the obvious, but, indeed, what certainly deserves to be preserved for future generations is the historiographical tradition, including examples like *Das baltische Herrenhaus*. The book can be seen as an example of what we would today call heritage studies in several respects, but by now it has come to constitute in itself a case of historiographical heritage.

Feuereisen once wrote about Baron Wolff, who continued to contribute to the three volumes, that his "Heimatliebe damit ein bleibendes Denkmal gesetzt hat".<sup>118</sup> As a precedent for creating a national tradition in Baltic architecture,<sup>119</sup> Pirang's "heritage" is valuable for the history of the discipline – beyond the love of his homeland to which it gives an enduring form, and despite its ideological allusions. Just like the monuments themselves,

116 E.g. Ants Hein: *Stenhus'id, arx'id, torne'd...* Eesti mõisaarhitektuuri vanem kihistus [Stenhus, arx, torne... The oldest layer in manor architecture of Estonia], Tartu 2016.

117 Especially Hein, *Eesti mõisaarhitektuur* (see note 8). He too begins the revival styles with mid-19th century, but takes the first stylistic explorations back to the 1830s.

118 Feuereisen, Vorwort (see note 42).

119 Cf. Jõekalda, *Monuments* (see note 26), pp. 219-222.

those “eloquent witnesses of a lost time”,<sup>120</sup> texts must be viewed with critical distance but with keen attention as well, because they can answer questions not only about the time in which they were written but about the present, and perhaps even the future.

#### Archival sources from the National Archives of Estonia (Rahvusarhiiv)

ERA.1108.5.371, p. 2: Muinsusnõukogu kodukord [Rules of procedure of the Heritage Council] (1925–1926).

ERA.1108.5.374, pp. 235 f.: Harju Maakonnavalitsuse ettepanekud Haridusministeeriumile [Harju county municipality's proposals to the Ministry of Education] (1926).

ERA.1108.5.762, pp. 8, 14: correspondence (1933–1934).

ERA.2218.1.84, pp. 1-32: Muinsuskaitsele võetud ajalooliste muinsusvarade nimestik [Historical monuments listed under heritage protection] (1935–1940).

ERA.R-14.1.467, pp. 24-30: correspondence (1930s).

#### Zusammenfassung

In dem Beitrag werden die Zusammenhänge zwischen dem Erhalt der Herrenhausarchitektur und der Tradierung von Familiengeschichte diskutiert; Aspekte des Selbstverständnisses der deutschbaltischen Bevölkerung und insbesondere des Adels in Bezug auf sein Privateigentum angesprochen. Der Untersuchungszeitraum sind die ersten Jahrzehnte des 20. Jahrhunderts, als die kulturellen Gedächtnisse in der Region aktiv miteinander konkurrierten.

Inwieweit wurde die Herrenhausarchitektur in der Kunstgeschichtsschreibung aus der Perspektive von Familientraditionen untersucht? Wie wurden Traditionen auch nach der Auswanderung der ehemaligen Gutsbesitzer gepflegt? Anhand der *Heritage Studies* wird diesen Fragen nachgegangen. Im Fokus der Analyse steht die Monografie von Heinz Pirang *Das baltische Herrenhaus*. Das 1926 bis 1930 in Riga in drei Bänden erschienene Buch umfasst den Zeitraum, in dem die Eigenstaatlichkeiten erfolgten (1918), das Eigentum der Deutschbalten war gerade verstaatlicht worden, viele Deutschbalten verließen das Baltikum, und das Gesetz zum Denkmalschutz war 1925 erlassen worden. Andererseits fehlten noch grundlegende Ansätze zur Architekturgeschichte – es gab nur Wilhelm Neumanns 1887 erschienene Monografie *Grundriss einer Geschichte der bildenden Künste und des Kunstgewerbes in Liv-, Est- und Kurland vom Ende des 12. bis zum Ausgang des 18. Jahrhunderts*. Im Beitrag werden die Einstellungen Pirangs, sowohl im national-ideologischen als auch im akademischen Diskurs, untersucht. Aus heutiger Sicht ist es deshalb interessant, Pirangs Buch durch die Linse der *Heritage Studies* zu betrachten.

120 Pirang, *Herrenhaus* (see note 5), vol. 1, p. 7.