IGOR FILIPPOV &
FLOCEL SABATÉ (eds.)

IDENTITY AND LOSS OF HISTORICAL MEMORY

THE DESTRUCTION OF ARCHIVES

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Contents

Destruction of Archives and Historical Science

Igor Sviatoslavovich FILIPPOV
Lomonosov Moscow State University

Destruction of archives is a subject which many researchers would like to avoid, even those who study wars and revolutions. For many of them, not to mention their readers, conquests, combats, conspiracies, coups d'etat, beheadings, stabbing, poisoning or other ways of eliminating monarchs and politicians are much more interesting and important subjects. Professional historians are of course aware of archives having been burned, shelled, flooded, sold to paper mills or sent to arsenals to make cartouches. They are also aware of archives deliberately or accidentally dispersed or left to rot and be devoured by rats and insects or fall into the hands of thieves hunting for rarities, silver stamps attached to old charters or specimens to use for forgeries. However, the man in the street has but a very vague idea of such things, nor does he usually realise the consequences of these disasters for studying the past. The same is true of course for historically important libraries, which often store ancient manuscripts and archival documents *per se* for one reason or another classified as manuscripts[1].

This is both understandable (given the indifference of many people to history) and bewildering because archives are known to perish even in our days and in Europe – to say nothing of remoter parts of the world where war or negligence in preserving documents is rather common.

One of the best known examples of this sort is the shelling and eventual burning on 25th August 1992 of the National Library of Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia, during the siege of the city, not by Serbs as it is often claimed, because Bosnian Serbs considered the Library their Memorial Treasury as well, and even called it *Вьечница* (Vijećnica), i.e. a place where cultural treasures are preserved for eternity. It would be much more correct to blame the radical wing of the Bosnian Serb army for this

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[1]   I received diverse and valuable advice about this paper from my colleagues and students: Grigoriy Borisov, Alexander Ivlev, Zoya Metlitskaya, Vadim Prozorov, Vasilina Sidorova, Alexander Shakhov. I am deeply grateful for their assistance.

disaster. Before the shelling, the Library contained more than 1.5 million books, some unique, together with thousands of manuscripts. Only a few were saved by enthusiasts; some of the most precious items were stolen; the rest were annihilated. This event received much publicity in the West and one can say that in general terms it is quite well known[2].

Unfortunately, people from the West, even intellectuals, usually have no idea that, the same year, two similar crimes against culture took place in Sukhumi, the capital of the autonomous, then self-proclaimed independent Republic of Abkhazia, located on the eastern coast of the Black Sea. Following the break-up of the USSR, the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia rebelled against the government of Georgia of which it had been part since 1921 by the then decision of the new Bolshevik rulers of Moscow and the former Russian empire. The rebels soon lost ground, which came as no surprise since by 1992 they constituted a minority of Abkhazia's population, and the republic was occupied by the newly formed Georgian army and the Georgian guards. However, by autumn 1992, the Abkhazian forces, moving from the north, were on the offensive and after they took the town of Gagra, second in importance in the small republic, it became likely that Sukhumi would soon fall too. In these circumstances, some of the Georgian guards chose to destroy everything Abkhazian in Sukhumi. At 16.40 on 22nd October, they set fire to the Gulia Institute of language, literature and history of Abkhazia, then at 16.51 also to the Central Archive of Abkhazia. The guards prevented the fire brigades and the collaborators of the two institutions from saving the buildings. As a result, they and their contents (including unprinted reports of archaeological expeditions, collections of photos and folklore and the Institute's research library) were totally destroyed. Luckily, the National Library of the republic was not damaged. Still, it was a major blow to the

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2   András Riedlmayer, "Erasing the Past: The Destruction of Libraries and Archives in Bosnia-Herzegovina", *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin,* 29/1 (1995), pp. 7–11; Sarija Sarić, "Destruction of archival records in Bosnia and Herzegovina", *Arhivski vjesnik,* 42 (1999), pp. 223–230; András Riedlmayer, "From the Ashes: the Past and Future of Bosnia's Cultural Heritage," *Islam and Bosnia: Conflict Resolution and Foreign Policy in Multi-Ethnic States,* Maya Shatzmiller, ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2002), pp. 98–135; Donna-Lee Frieze, "The destruction of Sarajevo's Vijećnica: a case of genocidal cultural destruction?", *New directions in genocide research* (Oxon: Routledge, 2011), pp. 57–74; Helen Walasek, Richard Carlton, Amra Hadžimuhamedović, Valery Perry, Tina Wik, *Bosnia and the Destruction of Cultural Heritage* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015).

Abkhazian national culture, memory and identity[3]. It was also an attempt to erase the past, but no one seemed to care about it.

Other parts of Europe have recently and surprisingly lost much of its archival and library heritage as well. The most notorious case is that of the Cologne city archive which simply fell down on 3 March 2009. This was the result of miscalculation by engineers constructing an underground line. Excavating too much soil from the wrong place led to the appearance of huge voids which finally devoured the archival building[4]. On analyzing the event, the Germans use the word *Schlamperei*. Its English equivalent is probably "slipshodness" but since even those who think they know English well are unlikely to have ever come across it let me explain that we are dealing with a notion which means doing something without thinking first. Alas, it happens even with the Germans. The scale of the disaster is still not clear but it caused many archives and libraries across the world to launch or speed up their digitalization programmes.

Other sadly famous destructions of archives and especially of libraries have taken place over the last 2–3 decades. Let us recall a few. In the night of the 10th to the 11th June 1999, the joint library of the Lyon 2 and Lyon 3 universities suffered a politically and ideologically-motivated arson attack. It seems this was the way some people protested against the presence in the collection of the anti-Semitic and "revisionist" writings (some said to be unique) of a certain Jean Plantin. As a result, about 300,000 of the library's 450,000 books were destroyed[5]. It was a major blow to the very possibility of studying and carrying out research in Lyon[6].

3   Pavel V. Florensky, ed. *Белая книга Абхазии.Документы, материалы, свидетельства* (Moscow: Moscow typography № 7 of the Ministry of Press and Information of the Russian Federation, 1993), pp. 199–204; Valiko M. Pachulia, *Грузино-абхазская война 1992–1993 гг.(боевые действия)* (Sukhumi: Алашарбага, 2010), pp. 111–113.

4   Bettina Schmidt-Czaia, Ulrich S. Soénius, eds. *Gedächtnisort. Das Historische Archiv der Stadt Köln* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2010); Andreas Rossmann, "Der Preis der U-Bahn", *Frankfurter Allgemeine* (26th June 2016), <http://www.faz.net/>.

5   Robert Faurisson, "L'incendie criminel de la bibliothèque inter-universitaire de Lyon", *Le Blog inofficiel*, 20 December 2001. 25 June 2016, <http://robertfaurisson.blogspot.ru/2001/12>.

6   Upon hearing about this disaster, as a researcher and a former librarian, I decided to help the ruined library reconstitute at least its Russian collections. I chose to give away some of my own books and obtained the promise of many Russian colleagues to do the same. On 1st December 1999, I wrote a letter to the French ambassador in

Finally, I will mention two recent library catastrophes in my own country. The first took place on 14th-15th February 1988. For reasons not really established, a terrible fire broke out in the Library of the Academy of Sciences in Saint-Petersburg, the oldest in the country and one of the largest (more than 20 million items) in the world. The fire was put out only after 10 hours of struggle but as it was extinguished by water, many surviving books suffered from the remedy. 400,000 books (many of them published in 17th century) were totally burned, 500,000 books were no longer legible, 6 million were soaked in water, 7.5 million were affected by dampness. All methods of restoration were employed, including drying books page by page stretched out on special threads. Yet, 29 years later the work continues with no chance to recover a huge part of the collection[7].

In 2015, the bell tolled for the Library of the Academy of Sciences for Social Sciences in Moscow, also one of the richest in the world (it's also known as INION – the Institute of Scientific Information on Social Sciences). On 30th and 31st January, fire ravaged the library's storehouse and other premises, destroying most of the building and at least 5 million books and other items. In fact, the exact scale of the losses, as well as the reasons of the disaster, are still a matter of investigation. It seems to be the result of a combination of a tragic technical accident and not the best management. However, no verdict has yet been given[8].

Moscow (Hubert Colin de Verdière) and personally delivered it to the embassy. There was no answer but on 7th December, I managed to get in touch by phone with the embassy's cultural attaché, Mme Anne Duruflé, who said that she had been "bouleversée" by my offer because usually people ask for something but hardly ever offer to give anything. We agreed to transfer such books as I had already collected to the embassy on 21st December. As it turned out, Mme Duruflé did not have a car at her disposal that day so she proposed that I bring the books myself. Not having a car of my own, I rented one, took the books to the embassy and, with the help of Mme Duruflé's assistant, Igor Tscherbakov, carried them into one of the embassy's store houses. There were 408 of my own books, mainly on Russian history, philosophy and literature plus some books donated by other people. To my knowledge they never made it to Lyon nor came to the surface in Moscow. All my efforts to find out what happened to them were in vain. The only book which ever reached the Lyon library I took there in person and gave it myself to its director, Charles Micol, on 11th May 2000.

7   Valery P. Leonov, "Учит ли история тому, что она ничему не учит?", *Библиотечное дело*, 2 (2003), pp. 2–5.

8   The literature on this issue is abundant, not always accurate and often politicized beyond any reasonable measure. Here is a small choice of rather calm texts written by

These latter examples have of course nothing to do with revolutions and rather little with archives (though practically any library of importance, and certainly the mentioned ones) have either a manuscript department or an archive reflecting the history and present activities of the library. But it is at least a reminder that cultural disasters we are studying still happen today and have a serious impact on research. As for the preceding examples, namely those of Sarajevo, Sukhumi and Lyon, they clearly show that ideological and political ideas can still motivate people to fight with old-time documents and books as if they were living opponents made of flesh and blood. Are the cases discussed so much different from those that took place in 1789 or 1917?

We have also further proof that the history of archives, especially in turbulent times, is a fascinating subject that sheds light on the way people back in time thought and acted, on how much their thoughts and actions were the product of sincere belief, ignorance, fear, indifference, neglect of responsibility, hypocrisy, careerism or intelligence and genuine bravery. A complicated blend of eternal human feelings and those typical of a particular historical epoch.

But there is much more to it than an appeal to conduct research on interesting yet little studied issues or to be more attentive to the treasures we have inherited from the past. Explored from different points of view, the subjects approached by the authors of this collection of papers show how much a proper investigation of the problems "destroying and destruction of archives", "destroyed and distorted archives" can benefit a historian who is too often faced with these realities.

First of all, this book emphasizes the importance of reconstructing lost archives. I am speaking now both of physical reconstruction of the type so well demonstrated in Naples, Ypres, Dublin or Warsaw when, bit by bit, making use of identical documents preserved by chance or not in a totally different archive, of earlier publications (whole, partial, imperfect – it is not very essential in this case), of citations, even of allusions, of earlier scholars' personal handwritten copies and extracts from the perished

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people who know the subject, also from personal experience: Nadezhda Volchkova, "Братство по книге", *Научное сообщество,* 174 (2016), pp. 18–20; Olga Bolshakova, Zoya Metlitskaya, Mikhail Mints, "Воспоминания о прошлом и о будущем", *Библиотечное дело,* 264/6 (2016), p. 3–5. See also: Mariya Blokhina, "Пожар в ИНИОН", *Полит.ru,* 1 February 2015. 25 June 2016,< http://polit.ru/article/2015/02/01/lib_fire/>.

texts, – and of virtual reconstruction which enables us to get an idea of the volume of the archive, its structure, etc. This is much better than nothing (just one example: about 10% of the Archives of the Kingdom of Naples, totally destroyed in 1943, have been reconstructed this way) but, what is perhaps even more significant it is a means to have a general idea of the archive which will safeguard us from many silly mistakes.

In reality, historians rarely have nothing at all left from a destroyed archive; some documents, even in the original, though more often in later copies, escape destruction. If so, it is essential to put them in the right archival context, and this presumes knowledge of what the archive was like at the time of the documents' creation and later when it was used for one purpose or another. Not exceptionally for this sake we turn to better preserved archives. There is nothing wrong with this manoeuvre as long as we remember that, for example, a monastic archive, especially of the same order to which "our" archive belongs, is quite different in its organisation and functioning from, say, a municipal or notarial archive.

In our research, we naturally start out from the documentary collections preserved in contemporary archival institutions. Their organisation, as a rule, differs from one country or type of archive to another, so much so that a period of adjustment is needed for newcomers to find their way (virtually in most cases) around an archive they are unaccustomed to working in. However, we should not forget that rather often the present organisation of the archive has little in common with that of the Middle Ages or the Early Modern Period. So, before making any far-reaching conclusions about the place and even the meaning of the particular document we are studying, we must "undo" the work of the archivists of the last two centuries (sometimes more) in order to return this document to its proper historical context.

The reconstruction of the initial state of an archive may imply quite different types of research. For example, this could take the form of a virtual recreation of a large group of documents, which were artificially separated in the course of reforms or revolutionary events. Thus, in France in 1790, as a result of the abolishment of old provincial divisions and their substitution by departments, the archives of the *généralités,* parliaments and *chambres des comptes* of territories, which formerly constituted a living administrative entity, found themselves divided between departments. The criteria for passing a document to the archives of this or that department were sometimes not very clear (it could have been intended for several departments),

Historical Archives: Function and Destruction

Flocel Sabaté
Universitat de Lleida

All societies seek cohesion in the construction of a common narrative, which justifies continuity over time. Thus, each society has the basic and central necessity to identify itself with a memory taken as its own, one that has to be passed down from one generation to the next.

However, human memory is fragile. Many practices and customs last longer than the human record according to one of the most often repeated expressions in medieval documentation, which refers to facts and uses whose origins date back to *temps que no és memòria de omens* ("times which are not in the memory of men")[1]. So, things have to be recorded in writing. Very explicitly, when written accounts were made of the complaints about seigniorial breaches and abuses in the feudal context of the 11th and 12th centuries, the document often called for records to be kept of these events: *hec est memoria*[2]. Similarly, when various rights and duties to retain the existing obligations were collected, these sometimes clearly expressed the wish that this *memòria sia* ("be in the memory")[3].

Writing thus had to constitute a permanent record: in 1297, when King James II of the Crown of Aragon imposed reforms against impunity in the persecution of crimes, he explicitly ordered the territorial officials affected to copy the document in the manuscripts of their archives to ensure a perpetual memory[4]. In fact, this copy in the receptor archive complemented the one in the royal chancellery. To ensure that the king *no pusca esser enganat* ("he cannot be misled"), in 1288, the royal court of Aragon explicitly established that petitions and concessions had to be in writing,

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1 Arxiu Comarcal del Baix Ebre. Comú IV, 143, unnumbered, among many others.
2 Philip D. Rasico, "El català preliterari en documents procedents de l'antic bisbat d'Urgell (segles XI-XII)", *Urgellia*, 7 (1984–1985), p.287.
3 Arxiu de Sant Joan de les Abadesses. Documents sobre la jurisdiccio de l'Abat en la vegueria de la Ral, f. 1r.
4 Arxiu Comarcal del Bages. Fons del veguer, vol. 4, unnumbered.

which meant the corresponding register[5]. This thus fed into a royal archive that was duly arranged in numbered series to make it easily consultable for better management of royal power[6]. Throughout the 14th century, the successors to this Catalan-Aragonese monarch not only copied the documents emitted into the archive of the chancellery itself but these also very often state that the officials who receive the orders had to copy these into their own archives to maintain a record for the future[7]. Occasionally briefer recorded times were invoked for immediate application, as, for example, when the monarch granted a public post before it was vacant, warning to the corresponding official to register the order and keep in the record until the time came to apply the new nomination[8]. In all cases, although the royal court already had the corresponding archive to register everything, the king ordered in writing, instructions were given for the texts to be kept so that there was a record of the document on the part of the receptor[9].

At the same time, all governing institutions generated their own documentation, thus recording the management of power while also building specific memories. The territorial expansions and different degrees of social dominance were consolidated when some documentation took shape that showed the structure of power and established the links of continuity, in other words, when the written document became the basis of memory: *que als dits ordenaments e capítols sien meses en memòria de scripture* ("what said orderings and chapters are placed in written records")[10]. Thus, the document passed into the record and from there to the consolidation of collective identities, as is clear in the justification and development of the medieval municipal governments[11]. The municipal council archives kept

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5   Francesc Carreras Candi, "Redreç de la reyal casa: ordenaments de Pere 'lo Gran' e Anfós 'lo Lliberal' (Segle XIII)", *Boletín de la Real Academia de Buenas Letras de Barcelona*, 9/35 (1909), p. 106.

6   Federico Udina, "Formación del archivo", *Guía del Archivo de la Corona de Aragón* (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, 1986), pp. 28–29.

7   Arxiu de la Corona d'Aragó. Cancelleria, reg. 1913, ff. 113v–114r.

8   Arxiu de la Corona d'Aragó. Cancelleria, reg. 959, f. 281v.

9   Arxiu de la Corona d'Aragó. Cancelleria, reg. 912, ff. 149r–v.

10   Juan Antonio Barrio, "'Que als dits ordenaments e capítols sien meses en memòria de scriptura'. Modelos de identidad urbana en el reino de Valencia, siglos XIII–XV", *Anales de la Universidad de Alicante. Historia Medieval*, 16 (2009–2010), p. 245.

11   Robert Cuellas, "La création de l'identité dans la mémoire écrite: le cas de la ville de Balaguer au bas Moyen Âge", *Conditioned Identities. Wished-for and unwished-for identities*, Flocel Sabaté, ed. (Bern: Peter Lang, 2015), pp. 71–82.

the records about government functions belonging to local authorities, which developed specific institutions[12]. The same archives articulated also the basis for a specific urban identity, because this was always based on the documents selected and preserved by local rulers[13].

Given the importance of connecting all the economic obligations and habitual transactions in the social sphere, the necessity to register notarially the most varied activities, agreements and contracts was imposed from the Middle Ages on. Thus, there was a need to keep the records of everyday, private activities that generated very important notarial archives. They testify to all economic activity and social agreements and, for this same importance, they were everywhere subject to the corresponding regulation.[14] The public definition of the notary, as it had spread around all

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12   Georges Jehel, Philippe Racinet, *La ville médiéval. De l'Occident chrétien à l'Orient musulman V^e-XVe siècle* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2006), pp. 293–300.

13   *La question de l'identité des villes et plus particulièrement à la façon dont les élites urbaines concevaient et chérissaient leur identité. Pour se pencher sur cette question, il pourrait être très utile de faire des enquêtes sur la façon dont les municipalités du Moyen Âge géraient et utilisaient leurs archives à des fines politiques, juridiques, commémoratives et autres. Quelles sortes de documents voulait-on conserver à tout prix et pourquoi, quelles précautions prenait-on pour les sauvegarder dans un endroit approprié (à l'abri des intempéries et de convoitises), pour limiter l'accès aux archives et pour en préserver l'aspect secret ? À quels moments et à quels fins trouvait-on utile de sortir des documents des coffres-forts et autres armoires blindées ? Qui était à l'origine de la translation ou de l'ouverture des coffres : les édiles eux-mêmes ou les autorités centrales ? Que faisait-on des documents qu'on sortait des archives et s'empressait-on, besogne faite de les réintégrer ?* ("The question of the identity of towns and cities and especially how urban elites conceived and cherished identity. To address this issue, it could be very useful to study how medieval municipalities managed and used their archives for political, legal, and other commemorative ends. What sorts of documents would be preserved at all costs and why, what precautions were taken to keep them in a suitable place (protected from weather and lusts), to limit access to the archives and to preserve the secret aspect? When and for what was it useful to take the documents out of safes and other armored cabinets? Who was responsible for the moving or opening chests: the councilors themselves or the central authorities? What was done with the documents that came out of the archives and it was used, what was done to bring them back?"). Thérèse de Hemptinne, "Des sources pour une histoire des villes comparée ? Essai de typologie thématique", *La ville médiévale en débat*, Amélia Aguiar Andrade, Adelaide Millán da Costa, eds. (Lisbon: Instituto de Estudos Medievais, 2013), p. 27.

14   Reyes Rojas, "La memoria de lo privado en lo público: los escribanos públicos sevillanos", *Historia. Instituciones. Documentos*, 31 (2004), pp. 573–574.

Europe at the end of 12th century and specially during 13th century throughout Roman Law guarantees -before *l'escrivan no ere notari public* ("the writer was not a public notary") as it had stated in Béarn-[15], underlined the value of the register, the diversity of the information collected and, at the same time, the aim to preserve and watch over the notarial registers.

The aim to guarantee the documents was already a clear scope in European monasteries during the Early Middle Ages, given that the heritage management, with its social, economic and political consequences, was always based on the custody, care and management of the documents of the archive[16]. In fact, from the Middle Ages on, all the great patrimonies, whether noble, ecclesiastic or bourgeois, generated a large number of documents, which placed in the corresponding archives, registered all indicators of ownership, rights, obligations and social or economic links. That enabled jurisdiction to be exercised and the corresponding income received with full conviction and authority over the population affected. From the Early Middle Ages, the Church exemplified this dynamic, generating, housing and managing very abundant documentation. This was stored in its monasteries, cathedrals and other churches, all with archives essential for handling the extensive patrimony the Church accumulated all over Europe. In fact, the claims on and increase in property were based on the use of the documentation in the archives, using all sorts of strategies, even resorting to reiterate counterfeiting[17]. In any case, the documents allowed the Church to win always the numerous lawsuits looking for asserting its ownership of properties and domains[18]. Disputes about ownership, sometimes between the same ecclesiastic institutions, show that success was based on good management of the archives. In the Kingdom of Leon, for example, the long-running conflict (between the 10th and 12th centuries) about rights and incomes between the bishopric of Leon and the monastery of Sahagun was,

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15   Dominique Bidot-Germa, *Un notariat medieval. Droit, pouvoir et société en Béarn* (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2008), p. 46.

16   Ángel Martínez Sarrion, *Monjos i clergues a la recerca del notariat. Estudi dels documents llatins de l'abadia de Sankt Gallen (segles VIII-XII)* (Barcelona: Fundació Noguera, 1992), pp. 55–96.

17   Jordi Bolós, "El monestir com a institució feudal", *Temps de monestirs. Els monestirs catalans entorn l'any mil*, Marina Miquel, Margarida Sala, eds. (Barcelona: Pòrtic, 1999), p. 85.

18   Flocel Sabaté, *La feudalización de la sociedad catalana* (Granada: Ediciones de la Universitat de Granada, 2007), pp. 194–198.

in the Late Middle Ages. These stopped having sense at the start of the 18th century with the dynastic change that followed the War of the Spanish Succession, when absolutely all the administration was annulled and replaced by another homogenous one for all Spain, thus putting an end to the set of institutions that had existed since the Middle Ages, both the higher royal administration and the regional and local administrations, as well as services like justice or even the universities[28]. Then, the rich archives that stored the activities of the full range of administrations immediately ceased to be of use and, in many cases, were left unattended and thus opening the way for their loss.

It could also be that the institutions that reached the end of their days formed part of a dying world, so their disappearing traits were part of the old world that had to vanish. Back in 1649, in the context of the English Civil War, Gerrard Winstanley wrote that "the old world […] running up like parchment in the fire and wearing away"[29]. The image contrasted the rapid advance towards a new world with the destruction of the parchments that bore witness to the past. Significantly, this phrase was adopted by Prasanta Chakravarty as the most emblematic one for showing how, in the English Civil War of the 17th century, the new ideas, which meant the annihilation of the past, easily also carried away all its identifying traits, like the parchments[30]. In fact, in the 18th century, although with a greater impact, the contempt for the historical heritage, the documentation and even the people related with the past that had to be overcome[31] that followed the French revolution has even been described as a cause of *memoricides*[32]. In this context, in the same way that new functions were sought for old medieval buildings, like the reuse of their stones, leading to the disappearance of emblematic monuments[33], it is coherent that new uses were found for

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28 Josep Juan, "Los reinados de Felipe V y Fernando VI", *Política interior y exterior de los Borbones,* Josep Juan, Enrique Martínez (Tres Cantos: Istmo, 2001), pp. 96–133.

29 David Lowenstein, *Representing Revolutions in Milton and his Contemporaries. Religion, Politics, and Polemics in Radical Puritanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 1.

30 Prasanta Chakravarty, *Like Parchment in the fire. Literature and Radicalism in the English Civil War* (London–New York: Routledge, 2006).

31 Jean Sévillia, *Historiquement correct* (Paris: Perrin, 2006), pp. 155–201.

32 Reynald Secher, "La guerre de Vendée. Guerre civile, génocide, mémoricide", *Le livre noir de la révolution française,* Renaud Escande, ed. (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2008), pp. 227–248.

33 Sophie Jugie, Judith Kagan, Michel Huynh, *La chartreuse de Champmol et le Puits de Moïse* (Paris: Éditions Monum-Éditions du patrimoine, 2004), pp. 15–16.

the old parchments, such as supplying the ammunition to fight for the new world. Confidence in the future and the need to fight for this progress[34] meant contempt for the past, with the inherent destruction[35], which could obviously affect the documentation in the archives.

In other revolutionary moments, what was lethal for the documentation was the knowledge it held, so that the loss of these documents was very intentional. Throughout history, almost all popular revolts have involved the intentional burning of archives: when the Jewish quarters in the Iberian Peninsula were assaulted at the end of the 14th century, the population in cities like Barcelona took advantage of events to burn the accounts books with credits and obligations, not only those in the hands of the Jews but also any others that were registered in the court of the city's bailiff: *obriren la cort e scrivania del batle e prengueren los libres que y trobaren los quals cremaren en lo foch en la plaça de Sent Jacme* ("they entered the court and the scribes office of the bailiff and took the books that they found there and burned them on a fire in the square of Saint James")[36]. Half a millennium later, in the mid 19th century, the peasants in Aragon assaulted parishes to look for and burn the documentation about the lands they worked that belonged to, and were taxed by, the Church[37]. This recurred in other places throughout the same century with documents referring to taxation, recruitment or police repression[38].

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34   Karl Löwith, *El sentido de la historia* (Madrid: Aguilar, 1968), pp. 134–149.

35   *Le vandalisme de la révolution semble aller de soi; nul monument, nulle ville qui ne porte les traces de destructions opérées durant cette période capitale* ("the vandalism of the revolution seems obvious; no monument, no city without traces of this destruction during this capital period"). Alexandre Gady, "Le vandalisme révolutionnaire", *Le livre noir de la révolution française*, Renaud Escande, ed. (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2008), p. 249.

36   *Manual de novells ardits, vulgarment apellat dietari de antich consell barceloní*, eds. Frederic Schwartz, Francesc Carreras Candi, 28 vols. (Barcelona: Imprenta d'Enrich y Companyia, 1892), I, p. 18.

37   Francisco Castillón, "Exclaustración y quema de archivos parroquiales de la zona oriental oscense", *Cuadernos del Centro de Estudios de Monzón y Cinca Medio*, 32 (2005), pp. 181–211.

38   Montserrat Carreras, "Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Badalona", *Guia dels Arxius Històrics de Catalunya*, 9 vols. (Barcelona: Departament de Cultura de la Generalitat de Catalunya, 1992), V, p. 272; Gaspar Feliu, "La crema de convents a Barcelona, el 1835, en un manuscrit català de l'època", *Miscel·lània Aramon i Serra. Estudis de llengua i literaturas catalanes oferts a R. Aramon i Serra en el seu setantè aniversari*, 4 vols. (Barcelona: Curial Edicions Catalanes, 1980), II, p. 194.

In fact, by burning these documents, the indicators of ownership and domain were lost, but also all the references of identity. Similarly, eliminating the archives of an enemy was a much-repeated aim in itself. There is a lot of evidence that, at the start of the 19th century, when Napoleonic troops passed through towns, public buildings were ransacked, their interiors damaged and the documentation, whether ecclesiastic, municipal or notarial, piled up in great bonfires in the middle of the squares[39].

Often the aim is to erase traces of the immediate past. In Spain, in 1977, just before the first democratic elections since 1936, the government ordered the destruction of all the archives of the Falange, the single party that existed since 1939 under Franco's dictatorship. This included all the documentation in the provincial offices, which was very abundant given the meticulous way all the activities and personals files were gathered. In Barcelona alone, many lorries spent four days transporting piles of paper to an old industrial oven[40].

Similarly, sometimes political decisions can promote the convenience of destroying documentation, despite the historical harm that supposes: in 1964, for example, Canada agreed to destroy completely the archives referring to everyone rejected from active service in the armed forces for medical reasons[41].

Overcoming the past, setting up new institutions or annulling secular ecclesiastic institutions in the 19th century led to large masses of documentation without any practical use, the testimony of a past considered ominous and also indecipherable for a new society that did not know Latin or, even more so, lacked the rudimentary knowledge to read old palaeographies and interpret the documents adequately. Understandably, the great historical changes show great contempt for the memory of the past and the reduction of the evidence of that past to circumstantial or futile uses: parchments, which were considered useless in the Middle Ages were reused to cover manuscripts[42], and in the 18th century, they

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39   Arxiu Històric Comarcal de Balaguer. VI–I, Informació de testimonis, unnumbered.

40   Jaume Boix, Arcadi Espada, "Memoria que quema", *El Pais. Suplemento Domingo* (1 November 1992), p. 10.

41   See: "Deuxième Guerre mondiale : 1939–1945", *Bibliothèque et Archives Canada*. 4 April 2015, <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/fra/decouvrez/patrimoine-militaire/deux ieme-guerre mondiale/Pages/introduction.aspx>.

42   Eloy Benito Ruano, *El Libro del Limosnero de Isabel la Católica* (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 2004), p. 16.

Archives are the documentary memory of each society and so they become one of the pillars of its identity. Its destruction is sometimes accidental, but it is often deliberate in order to remove the ties with the past. The new times that revolutions attempt to reach usually involve forceful and symbolic ruptures with former identity, including the destruction of the economic, administrative and historical documentation. This book collects updated texts written by outstanding researchers from an initial Congress held in Moscow in 2006 in order to analyze the causes and consequences of the destructive violence against archives boasted during revolutionary turmoils. The studies pay special attention to the first important contempt and destruction of documentation, during the French Revolution; continue studying the damages to archives during 19th century; and culminated analyzing the effects of Russian Revolution over the documentation and the evolution until the end of the Soviet period.

Igor Filippov is Professor of Medieval History at the Moscow State Lomonossov University, former director of the Russian State Library (1992–1996) and author of the *Mediterranean France in the Early Middle ages* (PhD Dissertation, 2001).

Flocel Sabaté is Professor of Medieval History at the University of Lleida, ICREA researcher, doctor honoris causa of the Universidad Nacional de Cuyo (Argentina) and director of the research journal *Imago Temporis. Medium Aevum.*