

Chapter 6: Princely Projects and their Publics in the Eastern Empire

The openwork spire type developed at Cologne and Freiburg was only one of the spire types that had established itself in the German world by the first half of the fourteenth century, but it was the most elaborate and formally sophisticated. The complexity of the Freiburg spire emerges with particular clarity when contrasted with simplicity of the enormous timber spires constructed contemporaneously in Lübeck. With its twin spires over 125 meters high, the facade of the Marienkirche in Lübeck is the tallest two-tower facade completed in the Middle Ages, but its spires lack the rich detailing and visual interest of the openwork type, and their timber construction placed them in an inherently less pretentious class (fig. 1-7).¹ The two subtly mismatched stone spires of St. Elizabeth in Marburg, similarly, appear far simpler than the Freiburg spire, despite the gables, pinnacles, and balustrades at their bases (fig. 6-1). With their blank, flat, surfaces, the Marburg spires convey much the same impression that the comparably-scaled spires of Saint-Nicaise in Reims would have conveyed already in the thirteenth century (fig. 3-17). In early fourteenth-century Reutlingen, meanwhile, the builders of the local Marienkirche developed a humbler variation on the axial tower scheme seen at Freiburg, using sharp gables to blend the square-planned tower story directly into the spire above (fig. 6-2). The Reutlingen design is significant for its treatment of the tower face as part of the main facade plane, and for its early inclusion of a prominent balustraded “crow’s nest” near the spire tip, but the murality of the spire design contrasts with the dramatic linearization seen in the Freiburg spire, and even in the lower reaches of the Reutlingen tower.²

As these examples already begin to suggest, the architectural rank of a building or a spire scheme correlated only weakly with the social rank of its patrons. Artistic influences appear to have passed freely from the cathedral workshops of Cologne and Strasbourg to the workshops of Freiburg Minster and the Marienkirche in Reutlingen, burgher-funded buildings of lower ecclesiastical status. In socio-political terms, the Marienkirche in Lübeck and the Minster in Freiburg served similar purposes as symbols of burgher and civic pride, but their spires could hardly have been more different. The relatively humble spires of St. Elizabeth in Marburg, finally, crowned a building associated with the

¹ Max Hasse, *Die Marienkirche zu Lübeck* (Munich, 1983).

² Birgit Kayser, of the Reutlingen Stadtarchiv, notes that the Reutlingen tower was rebuilt in 1494 following a lightning strike; except for updated tracery detailing, though, the present structure copies the form of the original spire completed in the early 14th century. E-mail exchange with the author, July 2002.



6-1 Marburg, St. Elizabeth.



6-2 Reutlingen,
Marienkirche.

aristocratic patronage of the Teutonic knights.³ On these bases alone, it would be hard to argue that aristocratic pretenses contributed significantly to the development of artistically ambitious spire designs. Princely patronage nevertheless seems to have played an important role in the early diffusion of the openwork spire type, especially into the eastern territories of the empire.

The Habsburgs were among the first patrons to copy the openwork spire format introduced at Freiburg. This artistic connection makes good sense, given that the Habsburgs' ancestral lands were near Freiburg. By the middle decades of the fourteenth century, though, Austria had become the principal seat of Habsburg power, as it would remain for centuries. It is in Austria, therefore, that one finds two of the earliest openwork spires built in emulation of the Freiburg spire. The spires of the Habsburg-founded

³ Eberhard Leppin, *Die Elizabethkirche in Marburg an der Lahn* (Königstein im Taunus, 1999), 9. See also Wilson, *Gothic Cathedral*, 155-56; and Nussbaum, *German Gothic Church Architecture*, 44-48.

charterhouses of Gaming and Strassengel are comparatively small, but their openwork articulation makes their kinship with the Freiburg spire unmistakable (fig. 6-3). Both were apparently constructed in the middle decades of the fourteenth century, even before the acquisition of Freiburg by the Habsburgs in 1368. An "R" monogram together with other heraldic devices indicate that the patron responsible for the construction of the Strassengel spire was the Habsburg Archduke Rudolph IV, an ambitious prince known as "the founder" who dramatically enhanced the prestige of the Habsburg dynasty both through clever political maneuvering and through artistic and cultural patronage.⁴



6-3 Strassengel,
Charterhouse spire.

It was Rudolph IV who in 1359 laid the cornerstone of the tower that would eventually carry the largest openwork spire of the eastern Empire, that of the Stephansdom in Vienna (fig. I-11). It was in Vienna, far more than in Gaming and Strassengel, that the innovative spire projects of the Rhineland found their worthy eastern sequel. The Vienna project, moreover, was one of the first great tower projects begun after the successful completion of the Freiburg spire. Rudolph IV's ceremonial foundation of the Vienna tower predated by several decades the inception of the great burgher-driven spire projects of the southwestern Empire, many of which, as at Ulm (fig. I-9) were associated with the noted spire designer Ulrich von Ensingen and his descendants. The only eastern tower project that could rival Rudolph's in ambition was that of Prague Cathedral, which has usually been dated to years around 1400. Close analysis of the drawings associated with the Prague workshop suggests, however, that planning for the tower began far earlier, perhaps even before Rudolph IV began the tower of the Stephansdom.⁵ In many respects, moreover, Rudolph's patronage can be seen as a competitive rejoinder to that of his father-in-law, Emperor Charles IV, whose political ambitions

⁴ Hans J. Böker, "Der Wiener Stephansdom," MS (Vienna, forthcoming), 236.

⁵ See Hans J. Böker, "Spurensuche am Original," 14-15.

had already begun to propel the construction of Prague's Gothic cathedral 1340s.

In both political and artistic terms, it was the Prague of Charles IV that served as the main model for ambitious princely patrons in the eastern empire. Charles's astute use of artistic projects and institutional foundations to support his political program clearly and directly inspired Rudolph IV's similar interventions in Vienna.⁶ In artistic terms, moreover, the innovative work of the Parler circle at Prague Cathedral directly influenced the progress of spire-building initiatives not only in Vienna, but also in Meissen, where an openwork spire was added to the local cathedral in the years around 1400. Thus, the Prague workshop deserves a prominent place in the history of medieval spire design, even though the great tower of Prague Cathedral remained an incomplete fragment at the end of the Middle Ages,

Prague

The story of Prague Cathedral illustrates both the power and the limitations of aristocratic patronage. As at Cologne, the Gothic rebuilding campaigns in Prague were undertaken in imitation of French precedents as part of a self-conscious program of political display. As at Cologne also, the truncation of the great tower project at Prague reflected a divergence of interests between the cathedral's aristocratic patrons and the citizenry. Construction in Cologne had proceeded slowly, hobbled by the history of acrimonious relations between the archbishops and the burghers; construction in Prague was brought to a sudden halt by the Hussite wars, a conflict in which the cathedral came to represent interests opposed to those of the common man. The situation in Prague ultimately became more complex than in Cologne, as shifting political alliances unfolded across a fractured urban theater in an atmosphere colored by nationalism and religious ferment.

Prague Cathedral was built within the Hradcany, a hilltop castle complex separated from the greater part of the city by the river Vltava. The first cathedral of Prague was a rotunda erected by Přemyslid Prince Wenceslas in 925 to house relics of Saint Vitus that had been given to him by Emperor Henry I. Subsequently martyred, Wenceslas became national saint of Bohemia, and his remains were buried in the southern apse of the church, which was raised to cathedral status in 973. The church was reconstructed as a large basilica between 1060 and 1090 because the

⁶ Rupert Feuchtmüller, "Herzog Rudolph IV," in Anton Legner, ed., *Die Parler und der schöne Stil: Europäische Kunst unter den Luxemburgen* 5 vols. (Cologne, 1978), 2: 415-16.

original rotunda could no longer accomodate the throngs of pilgrims to the site.⁷ The surrounding castle district evolved mostly independent of the mercantile settlement on the right bank of the Vltava, which had been established in the tenth century and granted its right of self-government in the thirteenth. The construction of the stone Judith Bridge in 1170 facilitated travel between the two districts, but the cathedral remained well removed from the life of the merchants, which centered around the old city square.⁸ Significantly, when large numbers of German craftsmen moved to Prague in the late thirteenth century in response to the welcoming policies of Bohemia's king Ottokar II, they tended to settle on the same side of the river as the cathedral and castle. These aspects of urban topography tended to place the cathedral in a sphere largely alien to the majority of Prague's Czech citizens.

The man most responsible for changing the face of medieval Prague and its cathedral was Charles IV, who ruled as Holy Roman Emperor from 1348 until his death in 1378. His first building programs reflected strong French influence. Educated at the court of Charles V of France, from whom he took his name, Charles was the son of John of Luxembourg, the Francophile king of Bohemia. Impressed by the power and mystique of the French monarchy, Charles embarked on a self-conscious program of political maneuvering and propagandistic display, in which the expansion of Prague and its cathedral played an important part.⁹ By 1344 young Charles had convinced his former teacher, Pope Clement VI, to raise Prague to the status of an archbishopric, thus removing the Bohemian capital from its ecclesiastical dependence on Mainz. The rebuilding of the cathedral was undertaken in the same year, following French Gothic precedents. The first architect, Matthieu d'Arras, had worked at the cathedral of Narbonne in Languedoc. Like the Sainte-Chapelle, Prague cathedral was intended to house pieces of the true cross, since Charles collected relics in emulation of Louis IX. Matthieu also undertook the construction of Karlštejn castle, which served Charles as both a personal refuge and a holding place for the regalia of the empire. The emperor's patronage extended far beyond these courtly projects, however. In 1348 he established central Europe's first university, modeled on the University of Paris, and the Nové Město, or new city of Prague. This extensive quarter

⁷ Jiří Burian and Jiří Svoboda, *Die Prager Burg* (Prague, 1973), esp. 1-22. See also Jaroslava Staňková, Jiří Štursa, and Svatopluk Voděra, *Prague, Eleven Centuries of Architecture*, trans. Zbyněk Vyplél and David Vaughan (Prague, 1992), 9.

⁸ Staňková, Štursa, and Voděra, *Prague*, 65.

⁹ Eva Rosario, *Art and Propaganda: Charles IV of Bohemia, 1346-1378* (Rochester, NY, 2000). See also Jaromír Homolka, "Zu den ikonographischen Programmen Karls IV," in Legner, *Die Prager*, 2:607-18; and Dobroslav Libal, "Die Baukunst," in *ibid.*, 2:619-23.



6-4 Prague Cathedral, south flank.

nearly doubled the area of the old settlement, drawing on the examples of Rome and Avignon in one of the signal triumphs of medieval urban planning.¹⁰ Charles IV's French-inspired policies of governmental centralization infringed on the freedoms of other cities in the empire,¹¹ but Prague benefitted enormously from its new status as the imperial capital, growing by the close of the fourteenth century into one of the greatest cities in Europe.

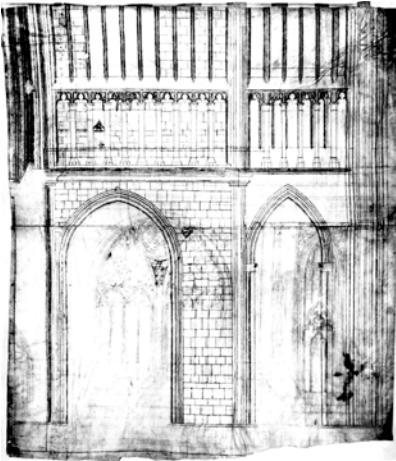
Charles IV was shrewd enough to realize that he could best promote the cult of his leadership by strengthening Bohemian national identity even as he drew on French

precedents. He therefore supported the use of the Czech language, and identified himself with his Přemyslid predecessors. Despite his Francocentric upbringing, Charles had no intention of making his empire into a cultural or political satellite of France. Following the death of Matthieu d'Arras, for example, it was a young German, Peter Parler, who was chosen as the new imperial architect. Appointed in 1356, the same year that Charles promulgated his Golden Bull establishing the electoral structure of the Holy Roman Empire, Parler played an important role in shaping and expressing the iconography of imperium. The dramatic modifications he introduced at Prague Cathedral can certainly be read in this context.

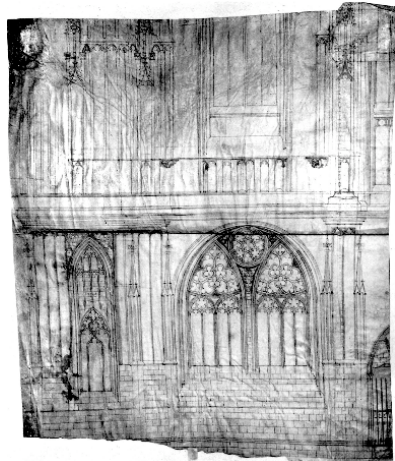
The noted historian of urbanism Wolfgang Braunfels discerned three principal iconographical goals behind Peter Parler's abandonment of the symmetrical French Rayonnant cathedral plan inherited from Matthieu of Arras: to provide greater prominence for the chapel of Saint Wenceslas, the national saint of Bohemia; to reorient the cathedral towards the royal palace on its south face; and to erect the cathedral's "massive south tower, which was calculated--when viewed from the city--to look as much like the tower

¹⁰ Wolfgang Braunfels, *Urban Design in Western Europe: Regime and Architecture, 900-1900*, trans. Kenneth J. Northcott (Chicago, 1988), 283.

¹¹ See the discussion of Ulm, chapter 7.



6-5 Prague Cathedral, elevation drawing of transept interior.



6-6 Prague Cathedral, elevation drawing of tower exterior.

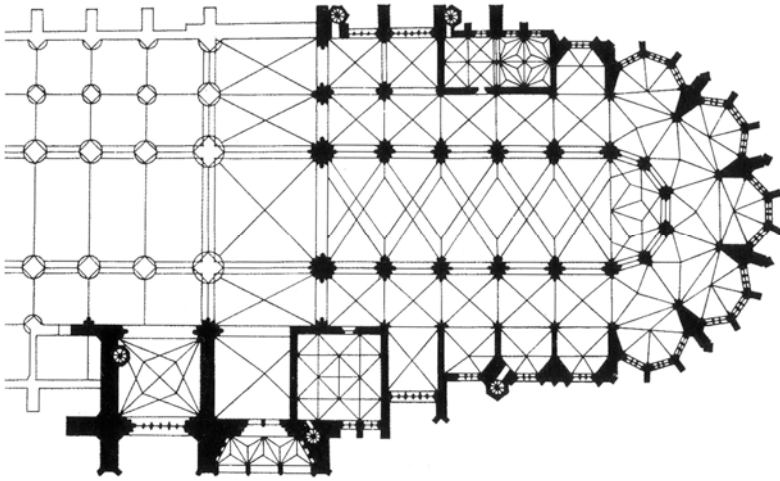
of the imperial residence as of the cathedral."¹² In Braunfels's opinion, therefore, the tower of the cathedral was to serve as a public advertisement of the union of imperial and archepiscopal power (fig. 6-4). This iconographical and topographical perspective serves as a valuable reminder that the dramatic asymmetry of Peter Parler's intervention at Prague reflected far more than the protean creativity of a young prodigy determined to subvert the conventions of traditional cathedral design.

Planning for Prague Cathedral's south tower may well have played a very different role in Peter Parler's overall design process than has usually been supposed. Until recently, most scholars have argued that construction of Prague Cathedral's south tower began only in 1396, decades after the completion of the adjacent south transept portal.¹³ The 1396 date refers, however, to the inception of work on the cathedral's nave, and there is no inherent reason to associate it with the tower. Indeed, the impressive scale of the tower torso built at Prague before the outbreak of the Hussite Wars in 1420 becomes plausible only in light of a far earlier start date.¹⁴ The

¹² Braunfels, *Urban Design*, 285.

¹³ On the 1396 date, see, for example, Barbara Baumüller, *Der Chor des Veitsdomes in Prag* (Berlin, 1994); Petr Chotěbor, "Der grosse Turm des Veitsdoms: Erkenntnisse, die bei den Instandsetzungsarbeiten im Jahr 2000 gewonnen wurden," in *Umění* 49 no. 3-4 (2001): 265-66; and Klára Benešová, "La haute tour de la cathédrale Saint Guy dans ses rapports avec la façade sud," *Umění* 49 no. 3-4 (2001): 274.

¹⁴ By 1420, the Prague tower had risen to a total height of 55 meters. By way of comparison, the Vienna tower reached this height by roughly 1420, after six decades of construction, and



6-7 Prague Cathedral, plan.

foundation of the tower, moreover, consists of the same masonry as that under the portal, suggesting that they were built at a similar date.¹⁵ On structural grounds, finally, it would have made good sense to construct the lower story of the tower early on to provide lateral support for the portal, which was completed by 1370. On these bases, it seems likely that construction of the Prague tower was begun already by the early 1360s.

Close scrutiny of the drawings associated with the planning of Prague Cathedral support the notion that Peter Parler dramatically revised his plans for the building's south flank even before work on the portal had gotten under way. Particularly telling in this respect are the erasure marks on one large parchment, which shows the interior and exterior faces of the tower bay on its recto and verso respectively (figs. 6-5 and 6-6).¹⁶ In the exterior view, the pinnacles on the left side of the tower bay have been

the Ulm tower by roughly 1480, after nine decades of construction. Even at Strasbourg, where the facade was already in place, it took 20 years for Ulrich von Ensingen to raise a slender 30-meter tower, and another 20 years for Johannes Hultz to raise the 30-meter spire. On these bases, it seems clear that it would have taken longer than 24 years to raise the Prague tower torso.

¹⁵ Chotěbor, "Grosse Turm," 263.

¹⁶ Hans Böker, conversations with the author in Vienna, January, 2003. Preliminary versions of Böker's analyses have been published as "Spurensuche am Original," 14-15. Böker's work will be published at greater length in the forthcoming catalog of drawings from the Kupferstichkabinett of the Akademie der bildenden Künste, Vienna.

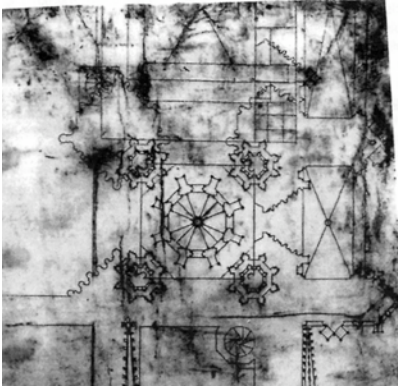
erased and revised, while the right ones have not, undercutting the previous assumption that the articulation of the tower was simply inherited from that of the portal and Wenceslas Chapel. Further erasures in the exterior view show that the lower tower window was originally meant to be far larger than it was built, with a lower sill. Erasures on the interior view, similarly, show that the arched entrance to the present tower bay was originally meant to span nearly the full width of the bay, leaving no space for the massive support wall that was later drawn in. Together, these erasures strongly suggest that Peter Parler initially foresaw a lightweight single-story chapel instead of a massive tower in the position just west of the south transept, and that the portal and Wenceslas Chapel were built in their present form only after the tower concept had been introduced.¹⁷

In this context, Peter Parler's decision to slam the boxy form of the Wenceslas Chapel into the space of the transept begins to look like an attempt to relocate a large square chapel space that had originally been planned for the space now occupied by the tower (fig. 6-7). The fact that the Wenceslas Chapel occupies sacred ground immediately over the Přemyslid rotunda of the earlier cathedral does not invalidate this suggestion. In his earliest plans for the cathedral, Peter Parler may well have conceived the Wenceslas Chapel in roughly its present position, but with more modest proportions, so that it would stand as the symmetrical pendant to the chapel of Saint Sigismund on the building's north side.¹⁸ Alternatively, there may have been plans to move the relics of Saint Wenceslas into the large chapel initially planned to occupy the present tower bay. Today, more than six centuries after the fact, it is difficult to conclusively establish the sequence of events that led to the present Wenceslas Chapel design, but it seems highly likely that Peter Parler's insertion of this boxy mass into the space of the transept was related to his decision to plant a large tower rather than an open chapel on the western edge of the transept. The unconventional design solutions developed by Peter Parler at Prague Cathedral, therefore, appear to have arisen at least in part in response to a complex series of programmatic changes; they did not spring full-blown from the mind of a twenty-three year old prodigy.

Further evidence for the complexity of the tower design process in Parler's circle comes from another drawing, which shows a tower plan in

¹⁷ This scenario helps to explain the unusual and structurally inadvisable location of the southwest tower buttress over the small window of the treasury bay to the west of the tower. The placement of the window was probably established, at least on paper, before the decision to build the south tower was taken.

¹⁸ As Böker noted to the author in January 2003, this would give Prague Cathedral a chapel dedication arrangement analogous to that later seen at the closely related Stephansdom in Vienna.



6-8 Tower plan, from Parler circle.

the upper portion of a parchment mostly devoted to a section of the Prague Cathedral choir (fig. 6-8). The plan and the elevation must have been drawn at roughly the same time; the large parchment was surely chosen to accommodate the elevation, but the plan was added in before the elevation was finished, since one of the finials was left off the elevation so as not to overlap the lines of the plan. Erasures in the elevation show that the drawings were produced before the proportions of the choir wall

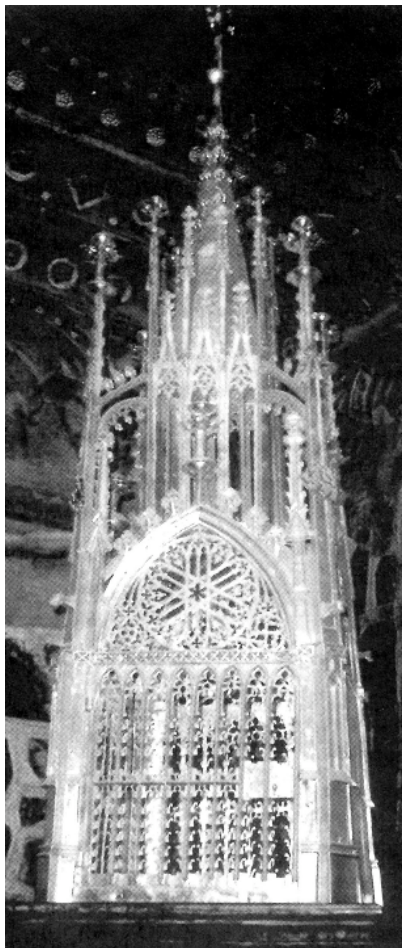
were fully determined, so both drawings must date from a fairly early phase of Peter Parler's tenure at Prague. The tower plan shown here cannot easily be understood as an early version of the south tower and transept facade. The upper left corner of the plan shows a continuous wall reaching inwards from the facade, rather than a window at a right angle to the facade, such as one would see in the corner of the south transept. Moreover, since this plan appears to have been drawn before the choir elevation was completed, and since the choir elevation had to be fully determined before the previously mentioned interior and exterior elevations of the tower bay were drawn up. Together these observations imply that the tower plan was conceived before it was decided to build a south tower in the bay initially planned as a large chapel. It is tempting to imagine, therefore, that this plan may represent a very early scheme for the west facade of Prague Cathedral, which was shelved when the construction of the present south tower was decided upon.¹⁹

Whatever its relationship to the planning of Prague Cathedral, the tower plan shown in the drawing stands as an interesting document of the kind of tower format that was being explored in the Parler workshop in the third quarter of the fourteenth century. This plan drawing, to a greater extent even than most other Gothic spire designs, incorporates octagonal forms and geometries. The four corner pinnacles shown in the drawing directly echo the octagonal plan form of the main spire base. Such a strict resemblance between plan of the main spire and its satellites was relatively

¹⁹ Jaroslav Bureš made the west facade proposal in "Die Prager Domfassade," *Acta Historiae Artium* 29 (1983): 3-50.

rare in continental spire design; the corner pinnacles at Chartres, Laon, Cologne, or Freiburg, for example, include square, stepped, and triangular plans, at least in their lower levels. The spire base in the Parler drawing, moreover, occupies a much smaller proportion of the total tower bay area than it had in these earlier spire designs.

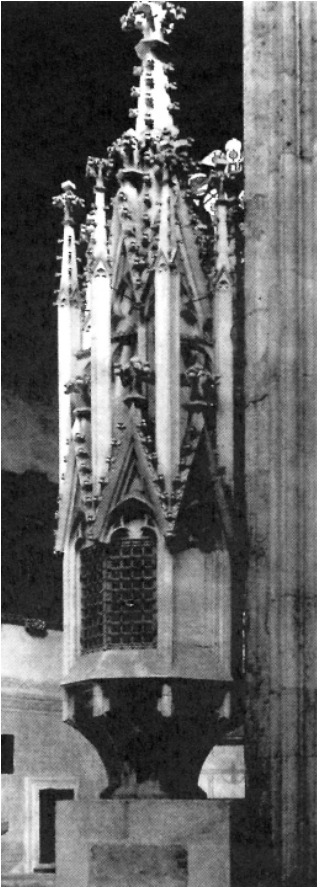
The narrowness of the spire base in the Parler drawing deserves note because it hints that the draftsman was developing a spire design that had more in common with contemporary micro-architecture than it did with the comparatively wide openwork spire format seen at Freiburg and in Cologne Plan F. In this respect the drawing might be seen as an updating of the design themes seen in Strasbourg Plan B, which had so much in common with the Montjoies of Saint Louis. The Parler drawing, executed a century later, is particularly interesting in this context because the Parler circle was responsible for developing a variety of interesting micro-architectural shrines that may well have been known to the creator of the drawing. In Prague Cathedral itself, in the Wenceslas Chapel,



6-9 Prague Cathedral, sacrament house in Wenceslas Chapel.

there sits an elaborate metal sacrament house usually attributed to the Parler workshop and dated to the third quarter of the fourteenth century (fig. 6-9).²⁰ This tower-shaped shrine, with a square-planned lower story, terminates in a slender octagonal spire whose size relative to the square

²⁰ Achim Timmermann, "Architektur und Eucharistie: Sakramentshäuser der Parlerzeit," *Das Münster* 55, no. 1 (2002): 9. The Neo-Gothic architect Ludvík Kohl used this shrine as a prototype for the full-scale spires that he intended to add to Prague Cathedral. See Jiří Burian, *Der Veitsdom auf der Prager Burg* (Bayreuth, 1979), 32.

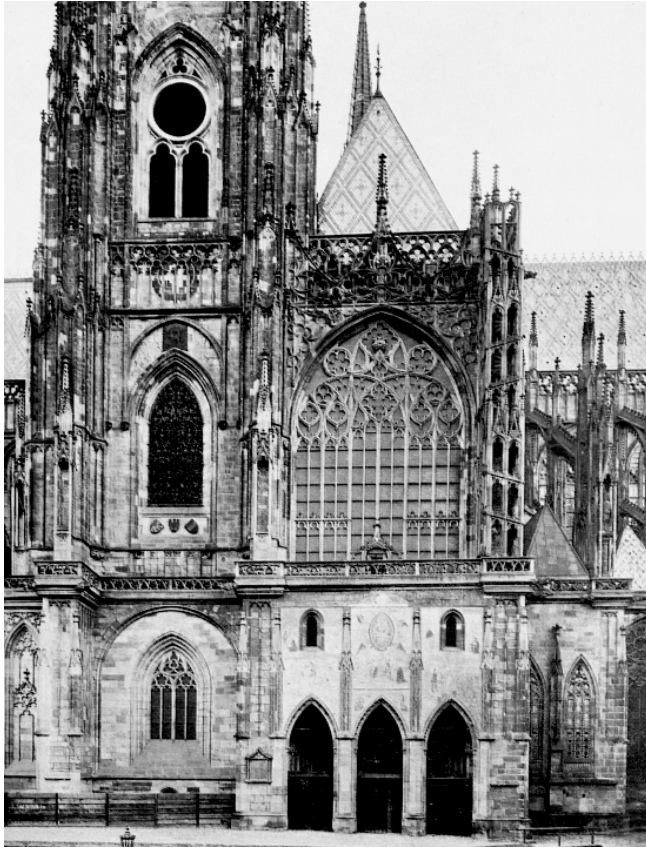


6-10 Kolin, St. Bartholomäus, sacrament house.

base recalls the corresponding relationship in the drawing. In the sacrament house, though, the four corner pinnacles are not octagonal, because they grow out of the complex corner buttresses, and they are linked to the main spire by decorative flying buttresses closely resembling those of Prague Cathedral. Decorative flying buttresses also appear in another Parlerian sacrament house, that of Kolin (fig. 6-10). These small flying buttresses emerge from eight narrow buttresses of rectangular plan that flank the shrine's octagonally symmetrical corpus. The plan of the shrine, therefore, is precisely the same as that of the central spire base shown in the tower drawing. In view of these similarities between the drawing and prominent examples of Parlerian micro-architecture, it is conceivable that the draftsman of the tower plan foresaw flying buttresses as part of his full-scale spire scheme. In the absence of any specific evidence to this effect in the drawing itself, though, it seems more likely that the draftsman simply foresaw a narrow, needle-like spire, one that would have more in common with the slender pinnacles of contemporary micro-architecture than it would with the fairly wide openwork spires of the Cologne-Freiburg type. These visions were synthesized in the south spire of the Stephansdom in Vienna, an openwork spire

with such narrow proportions that it registers as an opaque but finely textured spike.

It makes sense to read the forms in the Parlerian drawing with the Vienna spire in mind, because the Viennese spire design grew out of the same basic artistic tradition that produced not only the drawing but also the extant stump of the Prague Cathedral tower (fig. 6-11). Peter Parler's son Wenzel and Wenzel's Prague-trained assistant Peter Prachatitz determined



6-11 Prague Cathedral, south transept and tower, with Wenceslas chapel at bottom right.

much of the Viennese tower and spire design in the years around and after 1400. Influences from Prague may well have informed the Vienna tower workshop even decades earlier, as explained in detail below.

The south tower of Prague Cathedral, although probably begun early in Peter Parler's tenure in Prague, has even more in common with the Vienna tower than it appears to have with the tower shown in the plan drawing discussed above. In particular, the Prague tower as built includes diagonally planted cruciform corner flanges like those seen at Vienna rather than simpler buttresses designed to prepare the way for the octagonal corner pinnacles seen in the drawing. The introduction of these diagonal elements at Prague can be traced in the elevation drawing of the tower's southern face

(fig. 6-6), where the superb rendering of the animal corbels suggest that Peter Parler was determined to commit important new ideas to parchment himself, rather than relying on lesser draftsmen.²¹

The Prague tower as built, far more than the previously mentioned tower plan, suggests that Peter Parler had an intimate familiarity with the tower and spire of Freiburg. The dramatic contrast between the blocky murality of the Prague tower base and the verticality of its upper stories recalls the contrast between the square-planned tower and upper octagon at Freiburg. In both buildings, moreover, a prominent balustrade defines the transition between these zones. Even more tellingly, perhaps, the Freiburg spire cone incorporates complex intersecting and overlapping tracery patterns that anticipate the tracery forms used by Peter Parler at Prague. Finally, the Freiburg tower octagon abuts the most elegant openwork staircase turret built prior that of the Prague south transept. Together, these analogies strongly suggest that Peter Parler was familiar with the Freiburg spire, an impressive structure whose possible relevance for Parler's work has to date received little attention.

A link to Freiburg would help to explain not only certain details of Peter Parler's formal vocabulary, but also something of his dramatic career trajectory. Traditionally, Peter Parler has been most closely associated with Schwäbisch-Gmünd, where his father Heinrich worked, and with Cologne, the city named in the inscription "Peter Parler ab Colonia" carved beneath his portrait bust in the Prague triforium. In addition, most scholars agree that Parler was probably familiar with Strasbourg Cathedral, whose west facade buttress articulation appears to have influenced Parler's treatment of the south facade buttresses at Prague. Given the location of Freiburg between Schwäbisch-Gmünd and Strasbourg, it would have been amazing if he had not been aware of its pioneering openwork spire. Since the Freiburg choir was being planned in the years around 1350, immediately prior to his departure for Prague, Parler may well have been directly acquainted with the designer of the Freiburg choir. This designer, in turn, clearly understood the local tradition that had produced the Freiburg spire design several decades earlier.²² It is even conceivable that the Freiburg choir design was a late work by the same gifted master who, as a young man, had designed the Freiburg spire. If Peter Parler visited Freiburg, therefore, he could have gained a more or less direct familiarity with the workshop that had produced what was then by far the most spectacular spire in the German world.

²¹ Hans Böker, conversations with the author, Vienna, January, 2003.

²² See Flum, *Spätgotische Chor*, 125-26.

Charles IV may have recruited the young Peter Parler to Prague in part because of this putative connection of Freiburg. Parler's predecessor Matthieu d'Arras had not even begun to construct a tower at Prague Cathedral when he died in 1352, but the shrewd and aesthetically sensitive emperor may by then have concluded that a great tower could be a valuable addition to the cathedral complex. If so, he would have wanted to recruit a builder familiar with the latest and most impressive towers in the Gothic world--especially Freiburg's. His surprising decision to hire the twenty-three year old Peter Parler becomes more comprehensible if Parler came recommended by those in charge of the Freiburg workshop.

This admittedly conjectural scenario helps to explain not only the recruitment of the young Peter Parler, but also the rapid sequence of design revisions recorded in the drawings of Prague Cathedral. The earliest tower drawing in the Prague-related drawing corpus appears to be the plan drawing showing a western tower block with octagonal pinnacles. Since Matthieu d'Arras probably foresaw Prague Cathedral with a traditional twin-towered west facade block, this drawing may well document Peter Parler's first attempt to come to grips with Matthieu's legacy. At that early point in his tenure at Prague, Parler probably imagined that small rectangular chapels would flank the south side of the choir, and that a larger square-planned chapel would occupy the site of the present south tower. Soon, perhaps because of the emperor's eagerness to construct a tower as soon as possible, it was decided to construct the cathedral's massive south tower on the square base prepared for the chapel. One consequence of this change of plans was the overstressing of the foundations, which had not been designed to carry such a heavy structure.²³ Another consequence, in all probability, was Peter Parler's decision to slam the comparably large and boxy form of the Wenceslas Chapel into the space of the transept.

Since planning for the Prague tower probably began in Peter Parler's first years in Emperor Charles IV's service, it may have been the Prague tower project that inspired Charles's son-in-law Rudolph IV to lay the foundation stone of the Viennese Stephansdom's south tower in 1359. Alternatively, it may have been the launching of the Viennese project that catalyzed the dramatic changes of plan at Prague. Clearly, however, the two tower schemes influenced each other profoundly from their inception. Construction of the Prague tower probably began by roughly 1360, when Peter Parler was still a young man. By the 1390s, though, his sons Wenzel and Johann had begun to play active roles in the Prague workshop. Wenzel

²³ Chotěbor, "Grosse Turm," 263.

was called to Vienna in 1398 to work on the tower of the Stephansdom, probably because of the experience he had gained in working on the Prague tower.²⁴ His younger brother Johann then took over at Prague, having already displayed impressive talent in his designs for the choir of St. Barbara in Kutná Hora, which was consecrated in 1391.²⁵ Johann died in 1406, only seven years after his father, but work on the tower proceeded apace under the direction of a master named Petrilík until 1420, when the outbreak of the Hussite Wars made further cathedral construction effectively impossible.

The truncation of Prague Cathedral's south tower should be seen not simply as a side-effect of a chaotic social and political situation, but also as a metaphor for the central conflict of the Hussite Wars: the alienation of the Czech citizenry from the Holy Roman Empire and the Catholic church, two institutions whose partnership the cathedral tower had been designed to advertise. Charles IV had recognized the need to reach out to the citizenry of Bohemia--indeed, one of Peter Parler's first tasks in the emperor's service had been to reconnect the castle district to downtown Prague by the construction of a new stone bridge, the Charles Bridge.²⁶ The cathedral itself, moreover, was intended more as a shrine to the Bohemian nation than to the notion of Catholic imperium as a whole.²⁷ The isolation of the cathedral within a hilltop castle complex, however, kept it from ever becoming a civic monument in the sense that Strasbourg Cathedral or Freiburg Minster had. Following the death of Charles IV in 1378, the interests represented by the cathedral began to diverge from those of the citizenry. The bridge to the cathedral, metaphorically speaking, was too narrow.

The reign of Charles IV's son Wenceslas was troubled by religious and ethnic discord. The harmonious relations between church and state that Charles had so carefully cultivated broke down quickly, as the notorious murder of John of Nepomuk by Wenceslas' henchmen in 1393 revealed. Wenceslas's secular authority, meanwhile, was challenged by restive nobles, including his half-brother Sigismund and the Habsburg Duke

²⁴ Benešoska, "Haute tour," 275.

²⁵ For the careers of the family members, see Barbara Schock-Werner, "Die Parler," in Legner, *Die Parler*, 3: 6-11.

²⁶ The Judith Bridge had been destroyed in a flood in 1342. Staňková, Štursa, and Voděra, *Prague*, 65. Baumüller, in *Chor des Veitsdomes*, esp. 108-17, notes that the rebuilding of Prague Cathedral was linked to the overall rebuilding of Prague through the creation of a symbolically charged "Via Triumphalis" that would lead from the Emmaus Monastery past the great new church Saint Maria Schnee and across the Charles Bridge to Prague Castle, where the cathedral and the newly rebuilt All-Saints' Chapel stood. For the scenographic and iconographical importance of the bridge and its towers, see Rosario, *Art and Propaganda*, esp. 80-84.

²⁷ Baumüller, *Chor des Veitsdomes*, 125.

Albert IV, who imprisoned him in Vienna in 1400. As a result of this aristocratic uprising, Wenceslas was deposed as emperor in 1400, although he was allowed to keep the title of Bohemian king. Having alienated the nobles, Wenceslas proved equally inept at managing Bohemian public opinion, even though he had moved his residence from the Hradcany to the old city of Prague in 1382.²⁸ He badly mismanaged the conflict between Prague's Archbishop Zajíc, a conservative strongly influenced by the German clergy at the University of Prague, and Jan Hus, a progressive priest who preached to Czech audiences. Widespread rioting in Prague followed the burning of Hus at the Council of Constance in 1415. Tempers had not yet subsided in 1419, when Wenceslas pardoned Prague's German clergy, prompting irate Czechs to throw his Catholic councilors to their deaths in the first Defenestration of Prague. Wenceslas thereupon died in a stress-induced fit, and Sigismund, who had been named emperor in 1410, declared a Catholic crusade against the "Hussite" progressives. Sigismund and his army briefly occupied and plundered the Prague Castle complex in 1420, fleeing the Hussites after his hasty coronation. As the Hussite Wars began, construction of Prague Cathedral's south tower came to an end.

Cathedral construction stopped not simply because of the war, which saw armies of Hussite peasants led by the brilliant general Žižka repeatedly defeat Sigismund's crusaders, but also because the institutions of church and state that the cathedral represented had become entirely discredited in the eyes of the citizenry. In the anti-Catholic, anti-imperial climate of Hussite Prague, construction of a monument to the archbishop and the emperor was unthinkable. The obvious Franco-German origins of the cathedral project may also have been a liability in the increasingly nativist climate of fifteenth-century Bohemia. Consideration of patronage in Prague following the conclusion of the Hussite Wars lends qualified support to this interpretation. The Hussite Wars had ended in a victory for the moderate Hussites, the Ultraquists, so named because they insisted upon ultraquism, the receiving of wine as well as bread at communion. They did not share the violent anti-clericalism and social revolutionism of the radical Taborite peasantry, whose militias had become a threat to the Czech aristocracy and middle class comprising the Ultraquist faction. This dissension within the Hussite ranks was siezed upon by Sigismund and the Catholics, who allied themselves with the Ultraquists to crush the Taborites in 1434. Despite the opposition of Rome, a reformed Ultraquist church was established, and Bohemia recieved a Hussite ruler in the person of George of Poděbrady.

²⁸ Burian, *Der Veitsdom*, 34-35.



6-12 Prague, Týn Church.

The pattern of spire-building in mid-fifteenth-century Prague sheds light on the priorities and resources of the Hussite regime. Work on the cathedral was naturally at a standstill. In view of the rather limited architectural output of Hussite Prague, it is noteworthy that one of George of Poděbrady's first gestures upon becoming king was to add a spire to the church of Our Lady before Týn (fig. 6-12). The Týn Church had been begun by the Parler workshop in the 1380s, it could not have been more different from the cathedral in terms of its relationship to the people of Prague. Instead of being isolated in a castle across the Vltava, the Týn Church was located next to the old town square, just across from the city hall. Instead of being associated with the conservative Catholicism of Archbishop Zajíc and his German colleagues, the Týn Church had been the site of preachings by Hus's early

supporters. In purely formal terms, the north spire of the Týn Church erected in 1461 resembles not the great tower of the cathedral, but the far simpler roof-on-a-platform tower type familiar from the old town hall and echoed in the towers of the Charles Bridge. George of Poděbrady endowed the Týn Church not only with a spire but also with a statue of himself, the first Hussite King of Bohemia, and with a giant golden chalice, a motif borrowed from Hussite battle flags that symbolized equal access to the wine of communion.²⁹ Unlike the cathedral, with its taint of German and Catholic influence, the Týn Church was a monument to Czech autonomy and Hussite religious reform. Although it could not rival the cathedral in terms of size or grandeur, its new spire gave it a presence on the skyline that must have filled Prague's citizens with pride.

²⁹ Staňková, Štursa, and Voděra, *Prague*, 43.

In the reign of George of Poděbrady's successor Vladislav Jagiello, spire-related building initiatives were undertaken at both Prague Cathedral and the Týn Church, but their modesty relative to the rest of Vladislav's building program suggests the extent to which architectural priorities were changing in the years around 1500. Vladislav was already King of Poland when the Bohemian crown passed to him in 1471, and his relationship with the Prague citizenry was less than ideal: a popular insurrection in 1483 induced him to move his residence from the old city of Prague to the Hradcany, and he moved to Buda in 1491 after adding the kingdom of Hungary to his extensive realms. Even after his departure, though, he supported architectural projects in Prague, most of which involved the fortification and elaboration of the Hradcany. The talented architect Benedikt Ried designed not only new fortifications for the Hradcany, but also the justifiably famous Vladislav Hall, with its interesting hybrid of Gothic and Renaissance motifs, and the more conventionally Italianate Louis wing of the castle complex.³⁰ Italianate ideas of symmetry, rather than a profound enthusiasm for spire-building as such, may well have influenced Vladislav's decision to support the construction not only of a second spire for the Týn Church, but also of a great foundation for a northern cathedral tower to match the southern one begun by the Parlers.³¹ Because the foundations of the nave were also begun at this time, the north tower project should probably be understood as a preamble to completion of the cathedral as a whole. The project came to nothing, however, for Renaissance palaces had begun to displace the cathedral as the center of interest at and around Prague castle. This is a pity, since Ried's inventive reinterpretation of Parlerian precedents in other projects suggests that his spire designs would have been interesting indeed.

In a sense, Prague cathedral was truncated not once but twice. By Benedikt Ried's day, the incursion of Renaissance forms and patterns of patronage had largely left Gothic cathedral construction behind. A century earlier, the outbreak of the Hussite Wars, and the associated alienation of Prague's citizenry from the institutions of church and empire, had made the truncation of the cathedral's south tower virtually inevitable. The cultural flowering of Prague that began under Charles IV lasted long enough, however, to exercise a decisive impact on many later builders and patrons throughout the empire. In terms of spire design and construction, the most direct and impressive sequel to the Prague tower project was the spire-building project at the Stephansdom in Vienna. The earliest Parler-

³⁰ Staňková, Štursa, and Voděra, *Prague*, 82.

³¹ Libal, "Die Baukunst," in Legner, *Die Parler*, 2:623; and Baumüller, *Chor des Veitsdomes*, 19,



6-13 Meissen Cathedral, seen from the southeast.

influenced spire to be completed, however, was the slender openwork spire of Meissen Cathedral.

Meissen

In Meissen, as at Prague and Vienna, the tower-building project was associated with aristocratic patronage of a large church in which the architectural standards of French Rayonnant design were upheld to an extent unusual in central Europe (fig.6-13). Meissen's present cathedral was begun in the middle decades of the thirteenth century as one of the first churches in the eastern empire to incorporate the stylistic grammar of French Gothic design in largely undiluted form. In terms of overall layout and

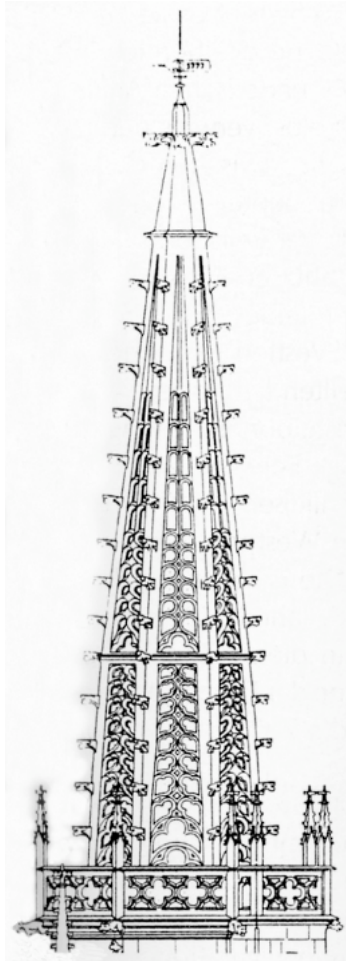
tower planning, however, Meissen Cathedral looks back to older and more characteristically Germanic precedents. Like the Romanesque cathedral that previously occupied the site, Meissen's Gothic cathedral includes eastern towers in addition to a massive facade block. The upper portions of the west facade date only to the twentieth century, but the eastern towers flanking the choir belong to the building's original medieval fabric. Their lower portions were built by 1270, in one of the first construction campaigns at Meissen's Gothic cathedral, and the slender openwork spire over the southeast tower was added in the years around 1400.³²

In terms of scale, expense, and formal sophistication, Meissen's openwork spire occupies an interesting intermediate niche between its humbler predecessors, the small openwork spires of Strassengel and Gaming, and their great prototype, the pioneering spire of Freiburg Minster. The Meissen spire was, in fact, the first openwork spire to be completed as part of a true cathedral, and the first since Freiburg's to be completed as part of a major cathedralesque church.³³ In many respects, the

³² For the chronology of these early campaigns, see Matthias Donath, *Die Baugeschichte des Doms zu Meissen, 1250-1400* (Leipzig, 2000), and Ernst-Heinz Lempert, *Dom zu Meissen*, trans. Margaret Marks (Munich, 1991).

³³ The openwork cone at Meissen is 21 meters high, while that of Freiburg is 45 meters. Donath, *Baugeschichte*, 320-24.

Meissen spire registers as an updated but smaller version of the Freiburg spire. Like the Freiburg spire, that of Meissen is a lacy openwork structure with a subtly convex profile (fig. 6-14). At Meissen, this convexity is slightly more obvious, since it results from two discrete kinks rather than from a continuous bowing. This inward kinking makes the spire tip appear relatively dull, especially compared to the slender form of the spire as a whole. The narrowness of the Meissen spire contrasts with the relative amplitude of the Freiburg spire, in part because the earlier tower stories at Meissen provided a far smaller support base than the massive portal block of the Freiburg tower. The spiky shape of the Meissen spire, though, resembles that of the slightly later spire of the Viennese Stephansdom, a structure where the tower base was even larger and heavier than that of Freiburg. The Viennese example, like the Parlerian drawing discussed previously (fig. 6-8), suggests that designers in the eastern reaches of the Empire were more willing to embrace narrow spire forms in the years around 1400 than their Rhenish predecessors had been a century earlier. Seen in this context, the slenderness of the Meissen spire marks it as the product of a later artistic generation than the Freiburg spire.



6-14 Meissen Cathedral,
elevation of openwork spire.

Although smaller and simpler in plan geometry than the Freiburg spire, the Meissen spire incorporates a variety of interesting formal innovations that, together with its svelte proportions, attest to its later date. The transition between square and octagonal forms in the blocky stories immediately beneath the Meissen spire base, for example, is mediated by some of the earliest decorative flying buttresses in the history of full-scale

tower design. In Freiburg and in Strasbourg Plan B, the flying buttress motif occurred only in the articulation of corner pinnacles, tabernacles, and other micro-architectural components. At Meissen, though these buttresses contribute to shaping the profile of the tower as a whole. Narrow uprights rise from each of the four corners of the square tower story, supporting branching pairs of flyers that reach the eight corners of octagonal story above. Comparable flying buttresses would figure in many tower designs later in the fifteenth century, but the most likely sources for its precocious appearance at Meissen are micro-architectural shrines developed by the Parler circle, such as the metal sacrament house in Prague Cathedral's Wenceslas Chapel.

In its surface articulation, as well as in its use of decorative flying buttresses, the Meissen spire scheme belongs to the world of Late Gothic rather than traditional Rayonnant design. The tracery in its slender faces consists exclusively of curvilinear teardrop forms, subdivided by only a single horizontal belt approximately a third of the way up, rather than by the repeated horizontal belts that place a rigid grid system across the spire faces seen at Freiburg and in Cologne Plan F. This abandonment of the grid was made possible in part by the narrowness of the Meissen spire, which required fewer such structural reinforcement elements than its larger predecessors. Clearly, however, this attempt to replace the grid by a more curvilinear articulation pattern cannot be explained purely in such terms, since analogous formal experiments were also contemplated in the roughly contemporary but far more ambitious spire projects developed by Ulrich von Ensingen and his followers.³⁴

Like Ulrich von Ensingen, the anonymous designer of the Meissen spire was surely familiar with the innovative work of Peter Parler and the Prague Cathedral workshop. Indeed, the artistic and political relationships between Meissen and Prague were very close in the later fourteenth century. The Meissen spire slightly postdates the second story of the cathedral's west facade block, whose blind tracery already manifests the influence of the Prague workshop. The blocky tower stories immediately beneath the Meissen spire, moreover, contain sculpted head corbels that closely resemble those seen in Prague Cathedral.³⁵ It thus appears likely that the articulation of the Meissen spire was inspired at least in part by the curvilinear tracery of the Prague Cathedral choir.

In political as well as artistic terms, influence from Prague played a decisive role in shaping the context for the Meissen spire's construction.

³⁴ Donath, *Baugeschichte*, 254-55.

³⁵ Donath, *Baugeschichte*, 320-21.

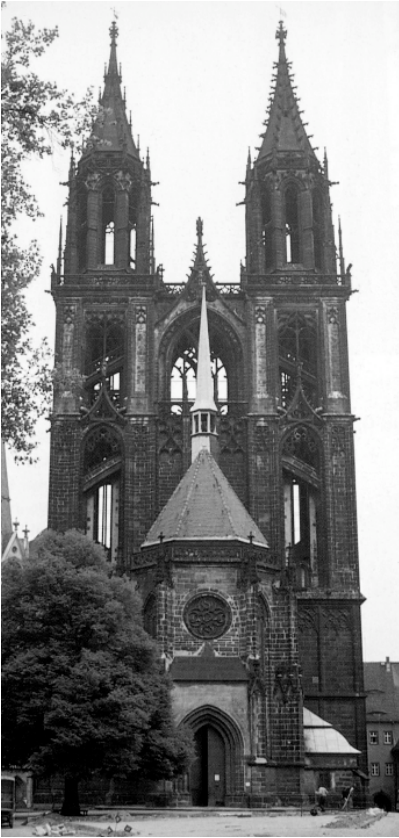
The ecclesiastical policies of Emperor Charles IV ultimately undercut the autonomy of a Meissen bishopric that had long fought to defend its independence against the local margraves. Charles succeeded in establishing his supporters in many offices in the chapter, and the cathedral was administratively transferred from the archdiocese of Magdeburg to that of Prague in 1365. In the following year, the future Margrave Wilhelm Wettin married one of the emperor's nieces.³⁶

Charles's death in 1378, and the subsequent decline of imperial authority under his son Wenceslas, dramatically strengthened the position of the Wettin family in the Meissen region. Wilhelm, in particular, exerted his influence over the church in the course of his reign, which lasted from 1382 to 1407. Following in the footsteps of Charles IV, he appointed as many of his favorites as possible to important chapter positions, and he induced Bishops Johann III von Kittlitz and Thimo von Colditz to swear loyalty oaths to him in 1393 and 1399, respectively. In an effort to recover some of the bishopric's lost independence, though, Thimo founded a chapel at Burg Stolpen, which would provide an autonomous base for the clergy. This chapel was finally promoted to collegiate church status in 1409. By that time, though, Wilhelm had already effectively established Meissen Cathedral itself as part of his personal domain. Wilhelm's personal intervention with Popes Boniface IX and Innocent VIII had achieved not only the exemption of Meissen from the control of the Prague archdiocese in 1399, but also the granting of a series of indulgences for the benefit of the Meissen cathedral fabric fund.³⁷ The construction of the cathedral's slender openwork spire in the years around 1400, therefore, deserves to be understood in the context of Wilhelm's personal advocacy.

The successful completion of the Meissen spire was a noteworthy achievement, but the subsequent history of the cathedral complex illustrates the limitations of the margraves' commitment to spire construction. The overall shape of the cathedral, with its two eastern towers and massive facade block, has led most recent scholars to conclude that four openwork spires were being planned for the building in the years around 1400. Of the cathedral's present spires, however, only the slender openwork spire of the south tower dates from the Gothic era. Its construction seems to have served Wilhelm's immediate needs; it provided a dramatic vertical focus for the cathedral, and for the surrounding palace of the margraves that shared the cathedral's hilltop site. It was taller and grander than the Habsburg-sponsored openwork spires of Gaming and

³⁶ Donath, *Baugeschichte*, 17-21.

³⁷ Donath, *Baugeschichte*, 32-33, 45.



6-15 Meissen Cathedral, facade.

Strassengel, and it was actually complete in Wilhelm's lifetime, unlike the much larger towers of Prague Cathedral and the Viennese Stephansdom. For these reasons, perhaps, construction of a matching spire on the cathedral's northeast tower came to seem superfluous. Over the course of the fifteenth century, therefore, the upper northeast tower was integrated into the adjacent palace complex instead of being crowned with a spire.³⁸

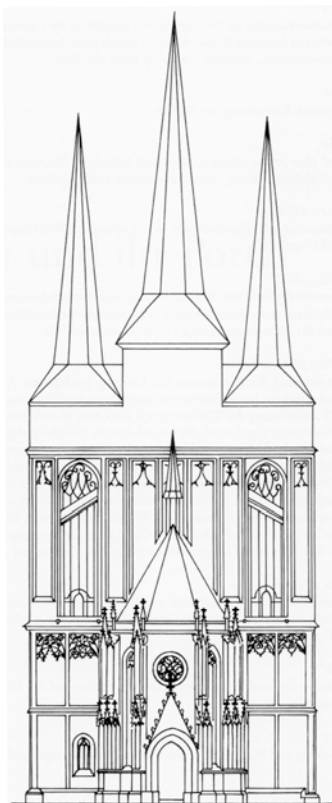
The fate of the cathedral's west facade block, like that of the eastern towers, suggests the decreasing priority of spire projects relative to palace construction in late medieval Meissen (fig. 6-15). Construction of the lowermost section of the facade block had already begun in roughly 1315, and the second story, with its rather Parlerian blind tracery, was completed by the end of the fourteenth century. Provisional wooden belfry turrets must have been erected atop the incomplete facade block soon

thereafter, since local chronicles report that a strong storm in 1413 destroyed a set of the cathedral's fragile belfry towers. Following the promotion of Margrave Friedrich the Valiant to the rank of elector of Saxony in 1423, work at the cathedral turned to the construction of the Chapel of the Magi, an oblong chapel protruding from the west facade that became the mausoleum of the Wettin dynasty. The chapel was complete and vaulted by 1446, despite a slowdown in work in the 1430s caused by the Hussite War.³⁹

³⁸ Donath, *Baugeschichte*, 123-25.

³⁹ For the chronology of the facade up to the 1413 storm, see Donath, *Baugeschichte*, 322-23; and Elisabeth Hütter et al., *Das Portal an der Westturmfront und die Fürstenkapelle*, vol 1 of *Forschungen zur Bau- und Kunstgeschichte des Meissner Domes* (Halle, 1999), esp. 31-

Construction of the third stage of the facade block itself followed only between 1472 and 1480, under the supervision of the talented architect Arnold of Westfalia, court architect for the brothers Ernst and Albrecht Wettin. Arnold's design for this facade story embodied an interesting updating and skeletalization of the blocky facade type seen at Magdeburg Cathedral, with slanting staircases visible inside the towers creating an effect of diagonality and transparency similar to that achieved in the west facade of Reims Cathedral and the nearby abbey of Saint-Nicaise two centuries earlier. Arnold saved his most dramatic pyrotechnics, however, for the interior of the adjacent wing he designed for the elector's palace, the Albrechtsburg, which featured boldly faceted vaults, twisted pier bases, and an elaborate spiral staircase.⁴⁰ Like Benedikt Ried at Prague a generation later, Arnold of Westfalia responded to the desires of his aristocratic patrons by creating palaces at least as striking as their contemporary churches.



6-16 Meissen Cathedral, west facade (reconstruction).

Arnold may well have planned to crown the Meissen Cathedral facade with two masonry spires, but no original drawing survives to document such a project, and no such vision was realized until the twentieth century. Instead, a trio of slender timber spires (fig. 6-16) was added atop Arnold's facade story sometime between Arnold's death in 1482 and the creation of the oldest surviving view of Meissen in 1486. Lightning destroyed these fragile structures in 1547, and their single small Renaissance successor was dismantled in the late seventeenth century. The cathedral facade therefore stood as a spireless block for more than two

33, 82-89 (on 14th-century tower campaigns) and 176-189 (on the Chapel of the Magi). For the political context of the Chapel of the Magi, see Lemper, *Dom zu Meissen*, 16.

⁴⁰ On Arnold's work at Meissen, see Nussbaum, *German Gothic Church Architecture*, 189-91; de la Riestra, "Gothic in German Lands," 228-29, and Lemper, *Dom zu Meissen*, 18.

centuries; the upper story of the facade and the spired towers above were constructed only in the years between 1904 and 1908, in accord with the designs of the Neo-Gothic architect Carl Schäfer.⁴¹ Thus, while the impressive west facade of Meissen Cathedral today contributes more strongly to the building's profile than the openwork spire constructed in the reign of Margrave Wilhelm, only the latter was the fruit of a genuinely medieval spire-building initiative. The successful construction of that openwork spire suggests the power of Wilhelm's patronage, but its relatively small scale and subsequent failure of the cathedral workshop to produce another stone spire in the Gothic era demonstrate the limitations of the predominantly aristocratic structures of spire patronage that pertained in late medieval Meissen.

Vienna

The largest and most sophisticated spire completed in the eastern Empire, the south spire of the Stephansdom in Vienna, grew as the fruit of both aristocratic and civic patronage. In Vienna, as at Prague and Meissen, aristocratic ambition provided the original impetus for the spire-building enterprise. The initiator of the Vienna spire project was the Habsburg Duke Rudolph IV, the son-in-law of Emperor Charles IV. While Charles had chosen to construct an all-new French-style cathedral within his palace complex as seat of Prague's new episcopate, Rudolph IV adopted Vienna's parish church as the Habsburg Capella Regia.⁴² This choice was probably forced upon Rudolph by his lesser means, but it had the positive side effect of creating a partnership of architectural interest between the Habsburgs and the local citizenry. Unlike the cathedrals of Prague and Meissen, which were confined within hilltop palace complexes, the Stephansdom was an inherently public monument located at the very heart of its home city. Because its construction received substantial support from burgher and civic donations, the Vienna spire grew vastly taller than Meissen's in the very years when the Hussite Wars were forcing the abandonment of the Prague tower. The divergent fates of the closely related Prague and Vienna spire projects, like those of Cologne and Freiburg a century earlier, illustrate the importance of popular support for large-scale spire construction.

⁴¹ Hütter et al., *Das Portal*, 197-205.

⁴² This theme has been explored in Böker, "Der Stephansdom"; in Rupert Feuchtmüller, *Der Wiener Stephansdom* (Vienna, 1978); and in Feuchtmüller's "Herzog Rudolph IV. und die Wiener Stephanskirche," in Legner, *Die Parler*, 2: 415-17.



6-17 Vienna, Stephansdom.

The unconventional location of the Vienna spire along the south flank of the Stephansdom, and the unusual morphology of the building as whole, resulted largely from the piecemeal fashion in which Gothic additions were made to the previous Romanesque structure (fig. 6-17). The earliest records of the church that would become the Stephansdom come down from 1137, the year a Viennese parish was established within the diocese of Passau. In 1147 the new parish church was consecrated by the Bishop of Passau, although the building was probably completed only between 1160 and 1177.⁴³ Even at this early stage, it was recognized that the church might one day be promoted to cathedral status.⁴⁴ The large size and fully developed floorplan of the early church reflect this ambition. Vienna's Romanesque parish church was of roughly the same scale as its Gothic successor, with three apses in echelon, a fully developed transept, and a monumental two-towered western facade block. Each of these elements was retained in some form during the Late Gothic rebuilding. New tower stories were added to the already impressive Romanesque facade block early on to mark Emperor Frederick II's visit to Vienna in 1237, but wholesale reconstruction of the building began only in the fourteenth century, following the city's establishment as the principal power base of the Habsburg dynasty.

The first major Gothic campaigns at the Stephansdom involved the erection of new walls around the still-functioning Romanesque choir. This Romanesque structure was dismantled early in a second campaign, which saw the completion of the new choir's interior piers and rib vaults. The width of the vessels and the tri-apsial format were retained in the new construction, setting a pattern of creative reuse and adaptation that would continue to characterize the Vienna workshop. These campaigns have usually been dated to the period 1304-1340, which would place the completion of the Gothic choir in the reign of the Habsburg duke Albert II. For this reason it has often been called the Albertinian choir. Recently, however, Hans Böker has produced a revised overall chronology of the Stephansdom, arguing that both the choir and the subsequently-constructed Gothic nave were built decades later than previously supposed. Böker argues, in particular, that the completion of the Gothic choir fell in the reign of Albert II's son Rudolph IV, which lasted from 1359 to 1365. The southeastern corner of the choir structure, as he notes, appears to have been constructed together with the lowest portion of the Stephansdom's great

⁴³ Richard Perger and Walther Brauneis, *Die Mittelalterlichen Kirchen und Klöster Wiens* (Vienna, 1977), 45.

⁴⁴ Arthur Saliger, *Cathedral and Metropolitan Church: Saint Stephen's in Vienna*, 3rd ed., trans. Genoveva Nitz (Munich, 1990), 2.

southern tower, whose cornerstone Rudolph IV ceremonially placed in 1359.⁴⁵ By that point, administration of the Stephansdom workshop had been placed in the hands of the local government,⁴⁶ as it had been at Strasbourg more than half a century earlier, but the tower project clearly grew out of Rudolph's own program of political display.

Rudolph IV, known as "The Founder" because of his important role in establishing the power and autonomy of the Habsburg dynasty, appreciated the propagandistic value of architecture and liturgy even as a young man. While still a youth of seventeen, Rudolph established a chapel in one tower of the Viennese Hofburg, dedicating it to Saint Mary, the Holy Trinity, the Holy Blood, and All Saints. These were the same dedications that his father-in-law Charles IV had made at Prague, but they also served to commemorate Rudolph, who had been born on All Saints Day. Within this chapel Rudolph placed a shrine containing a fragment of the Crown of Thorns, following the example of Charles IV and Louis IX of France. Albert II and Charles IV formally recognized the establishment of Rudolph's chapel in 1356 and 1357 respectively, setting the stage for the next, more expansive phase of Rudolph's planning.⁴⁷ Among Rudolph's first acts as reigning duke of Austria was to preside, along with his wife Catherine, at the cornerstone-laying of the Stephansdom's south tower. Rudolph's long-term goal was doubtless to promote Vienna to episcopal rank, following once again the example of Charles IV at Prague. Lacking the resources to begin building a French-style cathedral, however, and perhaps attuned to the political and financial power of Vienna's citizenry, Rudolph made their parish church into the vehicle of his architectural expression. The substantial completion of the Gothicized Stephansdom in the Middle Ages attests to the wisdom of this choice.

Rudolph's modifications of the Stephansdom affected not only the building's architecture, but its furnishing and liturgy as well. To make the building function as Capella Regia for the Hapsburg dynasty, Rudolph collected the relics of the Hapsburg Saint Morandus and he chose the church as the site of his own tomb. In 1365 Rudolph also established a collegiate chapter at the Stephansdom, making use of rights and privileges initially granted to his palace chapel.⁴⁸ This chapel had served as an administrative proxy for the more ambitious Stephansdom project. Rudolph invested the provost of the chapter with a pseudo-episcopal ring and crozier, and the provost's throne was established in the middle of the

⁴⁵ Böker, "Stephansdom," 216.

⁴⁶ Feuchtmüller, *Wiener Stephansdom*, 183.

⁴⁷ See Feuchtmüller, "Herzog Rudolph IV," in Legner, *Die Parler*, 415.

⁴⁸ See Feuchtmüller, "Herzog Rudolph IV," in Legner, *Die Parler*, 415.

main choir, like a true bishop's cathedra. Meanwhile, the sequences of reliquary processions were modified to resemble those of the palace chapel from which the Hapsburg relics had been transferred. Clearly, Rudolph aimed to redefine not only the form but the meaning of the Stephansdom, with the long-term goal of establishing a cathedral in Vienna as Charles IV had in Prague.

Rudolph also emulated Charles by establishing a university in his capital. The university of Vienna, founded in 1365, developed in close association with the Stephansdom. Indeed, the provost of the church served as chancellor of the university.⁴⁹ Rudolph had initiated reconstruction of the Stephansdom at the site of the south tower, where a chapel dedicated to Saint Catherine would soon be established. This dedication honored his wife Catherine of Bohemia, but also referred to Saint Catherine's role as patron of the university.⁵⁰ Students and faculty were to enter the church through the adjacent south tower portal, although this structure was not completed until the 1380s. While the south side of the Stephansdom was oriented physically and iconographically towards the university and the city, the north side looked towards the houses of the provost and members of the chapter.⁵¹ In effect, this side of the church became the private sphere of the upper clergy, shut off from the public life of the city. This fact helps to explain the asymmetrical form of the present building, since the only great spire to be completed at the Stephansdom was the one founded by Rudolph IV on the building's more public southern face.

It remains unclear whether Rudolph IV and his builders originally envisioned a symmetrical church with two matching transept towers, as the fifteenth-century Viennese chronicler Thomas Ebendorfer suggested.⁵² A model church with a single large axial tower appears at the foot of the duke's tomb, but this model has been largely dismissed as an abstract architectural icon because it accords so poorly with the known building history of the actual Stephansdom.⁵³ In general, the Gothic parts of the Stephansdom were built up around their Romanesque predecessors to permit continuous performance of the liturgy, an ideal which the construction of a large crossing tower would surely have compromised. Not a shred of evidence for such a central tower project, moreover, has ever been discovered in the building's fabric. Far more plausible as

⁴⁹ Perger and Brauneis, *Kirchen Wiens*, 55.

⁵⁰ Marlene Zykan, "Zur Baugeschichte des Hochturms von St. Stephan," *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 23 (1970): 32.

⁵¹ Zykan, "Baugeschichte des Hochturms," 31-32; Böker, "Stephansdom," 247.

⁵² See Richard Perger, "Die Baumeister des Wiener Stephansdomes im Spätmittelalter," *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 23 (1970): 73.

⁵³ Feuchtmüller, *Wiener Stephansdom*, 118.

representations of the Stephansdom are the models held by two statues of Rudolph that now stand at the church's lateral nave portals, known as the Singertor and the Bischofstor. Each statue holds a model of a symmetrical church, with twin towers flanking a tri-apsial choir. The towers shown in the models are much smaller relative to the building than the present south tower, and there is no hint that the huge pyramidal roof of the nave had yet been conceived, but the overall format of the models may well reflect what Rudolph's builders originally had in mind, at least in a very general sense.⁵⁴ The Viennese architectural historian Marlene Zykan believes that the two-tower format should be seen as an explicit expression of pretensions to cathedral status.⁵⁵ Similarly, it has been observed that this design, with two new towers joining the twin towers of the west facade, resembles a Gothicized version of four-tower imperial cathedrals such as Worms and Speyer.⁵⁶ Whether or not such evocations were intended, Rudolph's planners no doubt meant to generate a suitably impressive design for the Stephansdom, subject to the constraints imposed by the existing fabric and their employer's less-than-imperial budget. In practice, construction activity centered on the Stephansdom's south tower, which rose slowly but steadily in the decades after 1359; work on its northern pendant began only a century later, after the south spire had already been completed. Because of this delay, the north tower remained incomplete at the close of the Gothic era, and it was anticlimactically capped off by a small turret in the later sixteenth century. Thus, while Rudolph's planners could not have foreseen the present asymmetrical form of the Stephansdom in detail, their decision to concentrate on the construction of the church's southern tower had dramatic consequences for the building's subsequent history.

Böker's revisionist study of the Stephansdom's construction chronology underlines the importance of the south tower project for Rudolph IV. Previous scholars had maintained that Rudolph's builders began the construction of the nave walls immediately after the cornerstone-laying ceremony of 1359, leaving construction of the tower for a later campaign. Böker argues persuasively, however, that the nave proper was not begun until 1400, and that the first campaigns undertaken by Rudolph's builders involved the construction of the lower southwestern nave chapel and the lower story of the great south tower.⁵⁷ The work of these early tower

⁵⁴ Böker doubts that even these models have real documentary value, noting that Rudolph's only active tower building took place on the south side. See *idem.*, "Stephansdom," 218, 239.

⁵⁵ Zykan, "Baugeschichte des Hochturms," 30.

⁵⁶ Saliger, *Cathedral and Metropolitan Church*, 3.

⁵⁷ The chronology proposed by Böker in chapter 2 of "Stephansdom" contrasts with those proposed by Saliger in *Cathedral and Metropolitan Church*, 26; and by Feuchtmüller in

campaigns has been overlooked because the resulting structures, most notably the lower portions of the tower's staircase turret and the western walls of the Chapel of Saint Catherine, have been incorporated into the subsequently built buttresses of the tower base.⁵⁸ This archeological situation makes it difficult to determine the precise tower form foreseen by Rudolph's builders, but circumstantial evidence offers some relevant clues.

It seems clear that the tower planned in Rudolph's day would have been far simpler than the current one, even in its lower stories. The models of the Stephansdom held by the statues of Rudolph in the nave portals, although of limited documentary value, show simple towers with short spires and boxy bases quite unlike the elaborately articulated base of the present tower. These depictions appear stylistically plausible because most Rudolphine structures, including the southwestern nave chapel, retain the prismatic clarity seen in the exterior walls of the Stephansdom choir. The boxy Rudolphine tower bases of the abbey church at Klosterneuburg are of particular interest in this connection, because the chronicler Thomas Ebendorfer reported that Rudolph IV chose a master from Klosterneuburg as his architect for the Stephansdom project. The precise connections between the projects are difficult to unravel, however, both because the abbey church has undergone many modifications since the Gothic period, and because the details of Ebendorfer's fifteenth-century chronicle are not always perfectly reliable. Attempts to establish the precise identity of the master from Klosterneuburg have proven inconclusive: the names Sigfridus and Cunradus Murator are recorded in conjunction with the Stephansdom project in the third quarter of the fourteenth century, but their roles are uncertain; the ducal architect Master Michael, whose work at both Klosterneuburg and Wiener Neustadt in the 1390s is well documented, would have been too young to serve as Rudolph's chief architect in 1359. Michael's ornate style, evident especially in the spirelike roadside marker known as the Spinnerin am Kreuz of Wiener Neustadt (fig. 8-5), contrasts dramatically with the simple boxy style of the Rudolphinian tower bases at Klosterneuburg. Michael's role in the construction of the Stephansdom, if any, came decades after Rudolph's reign.⁵⁹

Wiener Stephansdom, 169-70. Zykan, "Baugeschichte des Hochturms," 49-50, also argues that the nave came before the tower gable.

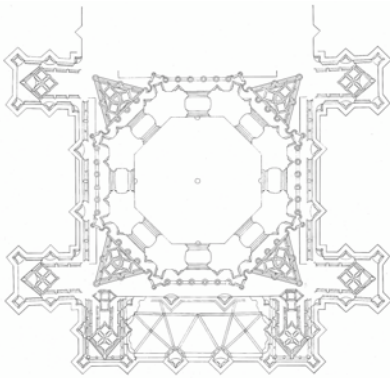
⁵⁸ Böker, "Stephansdom," 227-35.

⁵⁹ Böker, "Stephansdom," 219-24, discusses the Ebendorfer reference to the Master from Klosterneuburg. Feuchtmüller, in *Wiener Stephansdom*, 142-43, associated this master with the famous Master Michael "Knab," but Perger, in "Baumeister," 79-83, demonstrated that Michael would have been too young to have been Rudolph's designer.

Despite the relative simplicity typical of Rudolphine architecture, there is good reason to believe that Rudolph IV's builders intended from the first to crown the south tower of the Stephansdom with an openwork spire. Rudolph initiated the Stephansdom tower project at roughly the same time that the small openwork spires of Strassengel and Gaming, the first monuments to attest to Habsburg interest in the dramatic spire format pioneered at Freiburg early in the fourteenth century, were also under construction. Since the Stephansdom was a larger and more ostentatious church, and the principal architectural vehicle of Rudolph's substantial political ambitions, it would have been surprising indeed if his builders had settled for anything less sophisticated than an openwork spire. The Freiburg spire, moreover, clearly provided the model for an unexecuted plan for the Stephansdom tower, which survives in drawing from circa 1500 copied from a fourteenth-century original (fig. 6-18).⁶⁰ The triangular cross-section of the main pinnacles surrounding the tower octagon in this scheme, in particular, derive directly from those of the Freiburg tower.

The general idea of an openwork spire may well have informed the earliest workers on the Stephansdom tower, but even the original drawing of the Freiburg-like tower plan was probably produced at least a decade after Rudolph's reign. Direct connections between the Freiburg and Vienna workshops likely flourished most actively after 1368, the point three years after Rudolph's death when Freiburg placed itself under the protection of the Habsburgs. By the time the drawing was created, moreover, a variety of new ideas had come to influence the Vienna workshop. The drawing already includes large salient buttresses like those seen in the present Stephansdom tower base; with their characteristic decor of diagonally planted pinnacles, these buttresses recall the richly articulated west front of Strasbourg Cathedral more than the austere forms of Rudolph's day. Beside one of these major buttresses, moreover, the drawing shows the vaulted entry hall of the tower's south face, a feature of the current structure that recalls the similar entry hall of Prague Cathedral's south transept. The beginning of work on the Stephansdom tower in 1359 may have inspired the comparably ambitious tower project in Prague, but in the case of the entry hall design the influence almost certainly ran from Prague to Vienna, since the origin of this Gothicized triumphal arch motif makes most sense in the complex artistic and cultural ferment of Charles IV's Prague. Three

⁶⁰ Vienna, Akademie der bildenden Künste, inv. no. 16819. Böker, "Stephansdom," 277, associates this drawing with the later planning for the north tower, but Zykan, "Baugeschichte des Hochturms," 53-55, argues more plausibly for the design's early place in the south tower project. For reproductions of this and other drawings from the Vienna lodge, see Hans Koepf, *Die gotischen Planrisse der Wiener Sammlungen* (Vienna, 1969).



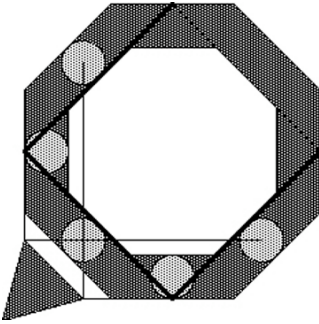
6-18 Vienna, Stephansdom, early tower plan (redrawn to show all four tower quadrants)

other subtle details of the Freiburg-like tower plan also suggest analogies to Peter Parler's work at Prague: the buttress articulation in the tower plan involves a change from triple to double lancets precisely analogous to that seen in the elevation drawing of the Prague choir; the triangular section of the tower's corner pinnacles matches that of the intermediate buttresses of the Prague choir, and the curious sequence of small circles around the perimeter of the octagon in the tower plan suggests the presence of a triforium-like story with round

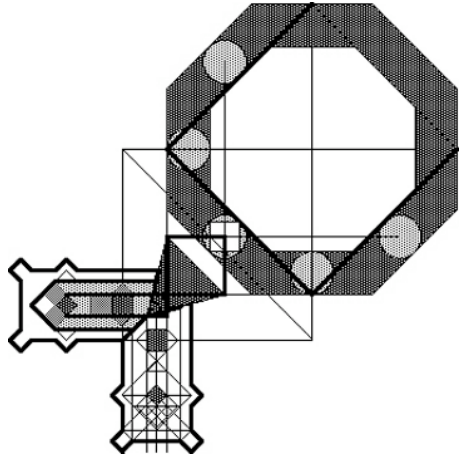
colonettes like those seen in the Prague choir triforium. On these bases, it seems likely the original inventor of this design was familiar with both Prague and Freiburg. As noted earlier in this chapter, Peter Parler himself appears to have been more influenced by the Freiburg spire than has usually been supposed. It is therefore entirely possible that the Freiburg-like Viennese tower plan was developed by Peter Parler, or by someone in his immediate circle. At the very least, this plan serves to underscore the dynamism of the dialog between those involved in Freiburg, Prague, and Vienna workshops.

The geometrical structure of the Freiburg-like tower plan strongly suggests that the original of this drawing was used to guide the construction of the Stephansdom tower's massive salient buttresses. As figures 6-19 a and b show, the plan unfolds naturally from the central tower octagon outwards, or from the top down. Significantly, the placement of the triangular pinnacles appears to have determined the width and placement of the buttress flanges that grow out from them. The geometry shown in these idealized figures agrees with the proportions of the actual tower buttresses almost perfectly, with deviations of less than one third of one percent. The surviving drawing recording this scheme, however, appears to be a fairly sloppy copy made in the years around 1500; the proportions of its buttresses are badly distorted, with buttress keels that come to points far sharper than the 90 degree corners that were intended.⁶¹

⁶¹ The copyist may well have become confused because the presence of the portal obscures an important geometrical focus point involving the pinnacled articulation of the buttress face.



6-19a Vienna, Stephansdom, geometry of early tower plan.



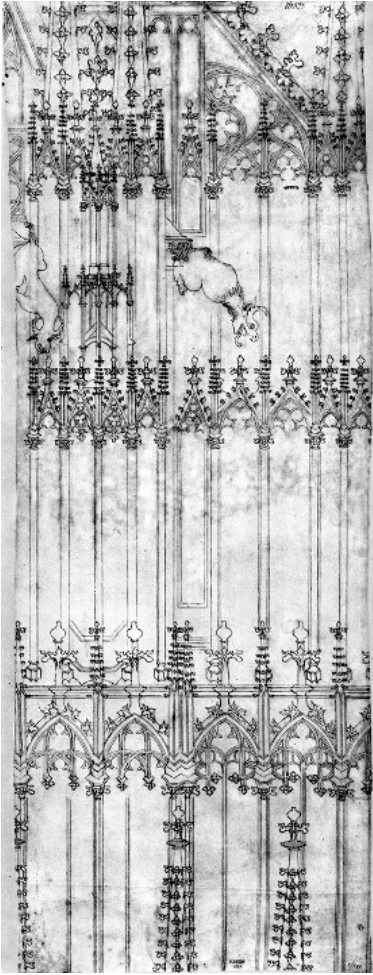
6-19b Vienna, Stephansdom, geometry of early tower plan, with one buttress set.

The original version of this drawing was probably produced in the 1370s, in time to guide construction of the massive tower buttresses.⁶² The altar of Saint Catherine's chapel, a small space wedged between the eastern buttress pair, was consecrated in 1396, suggesting that the lower tower story was complete by that date.⁶³ The hanging keystone of this chapel recalls those built by Peter Parler in Prague. Because the surviving copy of the drawing shows only the southeastern corner of the tower, it does not show the chapel, but the close association of the lower tower story with both Prague and the Freiburg-like drawing tends to support the previously proposed link between Peter Parler and Freiburg.

Through a happy accident of preservation, an elevation drawing survives to clarify how this Freiburg-like scheme for the Stephansdom tower would have appeared in three dimensions (fig. 6-20). This elevation drawing of the southeast tower buttress, like the corresponding plan, is a late fifteenth-century copy, as the flamboyantly curvilinear tracery in its upper section

⁶² This means that the plan would have been developed too early, to have been the work of Master Michael, the Habsburg ducal architect who flourished in the years around 1400. The Freiburg-like tower plan, however, seems to have inspired a number of Michael's designs. Michael's Spinnerin am Kreuz in Wiener Neustadt, for example, has a triangular plan with rectangular buttress saliences, rather like the upper stories of the corner pinnacles in the drawing. Both of the two major salient buttresses at each corner of the tower in the drawing, moreover, terminates in its own small pinnacle. The same geometry occurs not only at the junction between the square and octagonal zones of the Freiburg tower, but also at the outboard corner of the upper southwest nave chapel of the Stephansdom, which Böker has recently attributed to Master Michael. Böker, "Stephansdom," 300-302.

⁶³ Böker, "Stephansdom," 250-52; Zykan, "Baugeschichte des Hochturms," 52.



6-20 Vienna, Stephansdom,
elevation of tower buttress.

suggests.⁶⁴ The late Gothic copyist subtly modified the buttress articulation foreseen in the plan, replacing the foreseen three-into-two lancet pattern with a more uniform two-into-two pattern, and introducing complex tracery elements that would not have been present in the original, but the correspondence between the plan and elevation drawings remains clear nevertheless, especially since its scale precisely matches that of the Freiburg-like plan.

By using these two documents together, it is possible to construct a fairly reliable picture of the overall Stephansdom tower design foreseen in the 1370s (6-21). The walls of the tower would have been divided into three vertical slices, mirroring the arrangement seen in both the porch and in the great gable above. This consistent tripartite arrangement was abandoned in the second story of the present tower, for reasons explained below, but the gable theme was preserved, both in the tower and in the subsequently constructed walls of the nave. The lower corner of the gable is just visible at the upper left of the elevation drawing, and its three-fold subdivision by pinnacles can be read in plan from the small spurs that represent the pinnacle

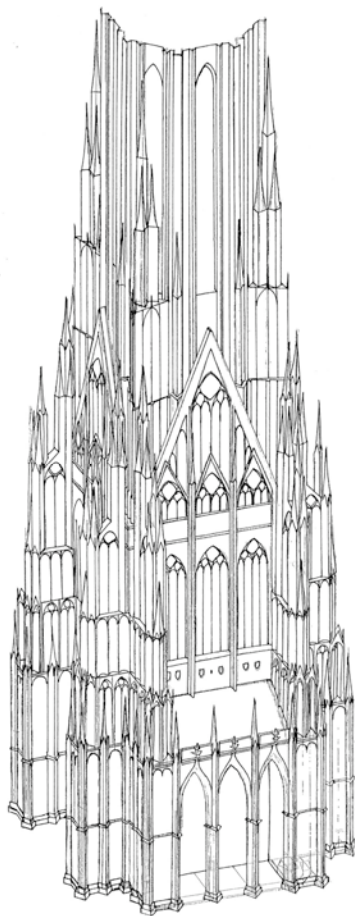
bases. In this tower scheme, though, no great belfry like the one in the present tower would have intruded in between this main gable and the

⁶⁴ Vienna, Akademie der bildende Künste, inv. no. 16825. Böker, "Stephansdom," 255-56, interprets this drawing in connection with repairs to the south tower after a lightning strike in 1507, but, as with the corresponding plan 16819, Zykan, "Baugeschichte des Hochturms," 56-59, plausibly suggests that the original version of these drawings were used early in the history of the south tower project.

octagonal tower core above. The Freiburg-derived upper stories of the spire would have rested directly upon the square-planned lower section of the tower, although the junction would be masked by the great gable. This gable would be even more conspicuous here than in the actual building, because its lower corners would not have been truncated by the rising corner buttresses of the belfry story.

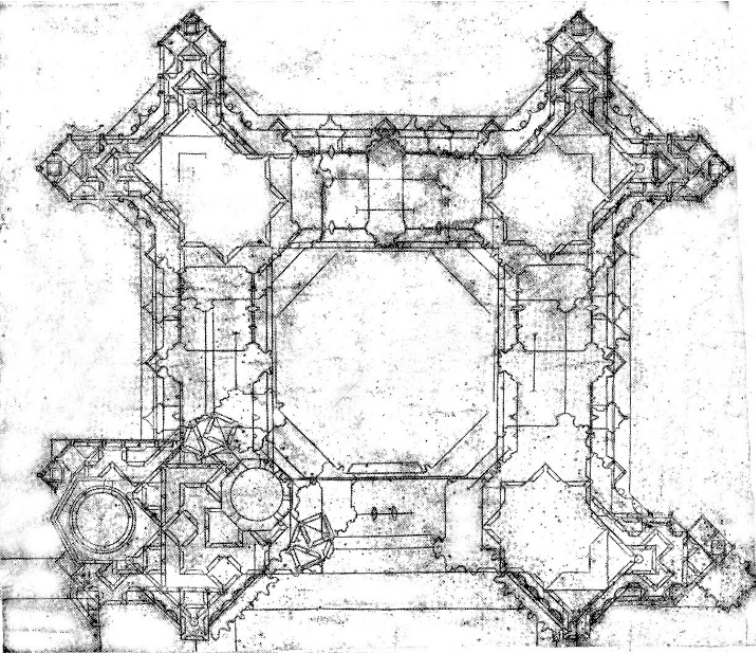
The use of the great gable seems to have offered both formal and iconographical advantages. Formally, the gable would have smoothed the visual transition between the square and octagonal stories of the tower, a function it no longer serves in the present, taller structure. Iconographically, the use of large gables may have been intended to evoke the gabled crown of the Habsburg dukes, as Böker, Zykan, and others have argued.⁶⁵ The insistent repetition of the gable form in the upper stories of the spire certainly suggests that specific meaning was attached to this motif. Around 1400, moreover, an even more explicitly crownlike termination, with gables surrounding a small openwork dome, was added to the Viennese church of St. Maria am Gestade (fig. 8-14),

which had been begun by the ducal architect Master Michael. It seems no coincidence that one of the few similar designs to incorporate such a gabled crown was developed in Frankfurt am Main, the traditional site of imperial elections. The gable crown form arose naturally in the spire bases of Freiburg and Cologne Plan F, but by the late fourteenth century at least some architects seem to have



6-21 Vienna, Stephansdom, reconstruction of original tower scheme.

⁶⁵ Böker, "Stephansdom," 237-38; Zykan, "Baugeschichte des Hochturms," 48, n. 60.

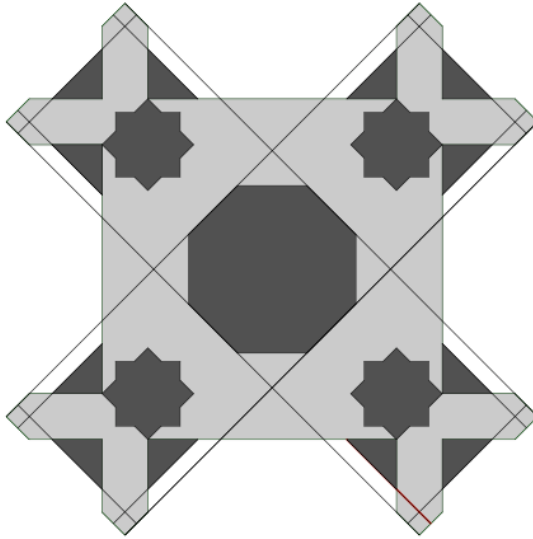


6-22 Vienna, Stephansdom, tower plan with revised superstructure.

been deploying the motif with more specific political self-consciousness. The great gables of the Stephansdom may well embody the largest systematic speculation on this theme; Böker even speculates that their three-in-one gable pattern may refer to the unity of the individual princes within the larger Habsburg dynasty.⁶⁶

A new chapter in the history of the Stephansdom tower project began in the late 1390s with the establishment of Peter Parler's son Wenzel at the head of the workshop. By that time, the patronage circumstances in Vienna were at last beginning to become more favorable than they were in Prague. This change would have been hard to foresee in the 1370s. When Rudolph IV died in 1365, leaving behind a large debt, his brothers Albert and Leopold began to quarrel among themselves, while Charles IV continued to enjoy his successful reign in Prague. The Habsburg lands were eventually partitioned between the rival brothers in 1379, soon after Charles's son Wenceslas became the Holy Roman Emperor and reigning king of Bohemia. After the death of Leopold in 1386, though, the

⁶⁶ Böker, "Stephansdom," 280-86.

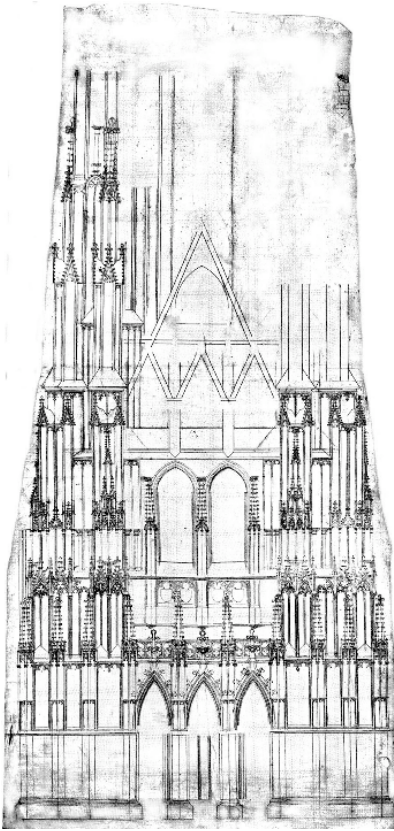


6-23 Vienna, Stephansdom, geometry of revised tower superstructure .

Habsburg lands were once again reunited under Albert III, and the Emperor's fortunes began to decline. In 1400, Wenceslas had been deposed as Emperor, and he was temporarily imprisoned in Vienna by Albert IV, an ally of his half-brother and rival Sigismund.⁶⁷ This episode begins to suggest the changing power relationship between the chief aristocrats of Prague and Vienna.

The contrasting fates of the Prague and Vienna tower projects, though, had at least as much to do with the different ways in which these aristocratically-initiated enterprises intersected with the interests of their urban publics. Prague Cathedral had always been isolated from the heart of downtown Prague, and its abandonment in the Hussite Wars underlines its alienation from the interests of the common man. The Stephansdom, though, as Vienna's principal parish church, had been administered by a civic fabric committee since the early fourteenth century, and it was the beneficiary of many generous burgher donations, especially in the years just after 1400. Some of this burgher largesse surely went to the

⁶⁷ On Rudolph's debt, his brothers' quarrels, and Wenceslas's imprisonment, see Böker, "Stephansdom," 240, 265-66, and 272.



6-24 Vienna, Stephansdom,
elevation of south tower scheme.

construction of the nave, especially if Böker is correct in arguing that the nave campaigns were begun in the early 1400s, rather than in Rudolph IV's reign, as most previous scholars had argued. This income stream, however, also propelled the tower project rapidly forward in the first decades of the fifteenth century. Indeed, the growth of popular and civic donation in this period has been widely interpreted as a factor in the decision to raise the Stephansdom tower higher than it had originally been planned.⁶⁸ Wenzel Parler, whose career in Prague had principally involved the construction of the cathedral's great south tower, evidently came to Vienna precisely so that he could participate in this tower enlargement project.

Wenzel Parler's dramatic revisions to the design of the Stephansdom tower can be traced at least partially in surviving drawings. A plan drawing now preserved in the Historisches Museum der Stadt

Wien includes the outlines of all the tower stories except for the lowest, which had already been completed by the time of Wenzel's arrival (fig. 6-22). Taking the proportions of the tower base as a given, Wenzel developed an entirely new geometry for the tower's upper stories, abandoning the triangular pinnacle forms used by the original designer. In their place, he deployed octagonally symmetrical pinnacles, flanked by diagonal flanges. The geometrical structure of the drawing clearly reveals how Wenzel deployed a network of diagonal lines across the tower base, creating a new form for the tower superstructure (fig. 6-23). The presence of these

⁶⁸ Böker, "Stephansdom," 239 and 266, cites Hans Tietze and Donin as major proponents of this theory.

reinforcing flanges suggests that Wenzel was already planning to increase the height of the tower, inserting a large belfry story similar to the one seen today. Because the flanges encroach on the wall surface between the buttresses, Wenzel had to reduce the number of windows in the second tower story from three to two.

These changes, already subtly perceptible in the plan drawing, become obvious in the corresponding elevation drawing (fig. 6-24). The lower two stories of the tower appear much as they were built, with animal corbels springing out of the corners of the tower base to support the diagonal buttress flanges above (fig. 6-25).

The complex diagonally planted cruciform buttresses of the second tower story closely resemble those of the south tower at Prague. Significantly, though, the stepwise reduction of the buttress mass through the peeling off of pinnacles was already foreseen in the earlier Freiburg-like tower scheme, which demonstrates that a close dialog already existed between the Vienna and Prague tower workshops early in the fourth quarter of the fourteenth century.

Wenzel Parler's richly sculptural buttress design left little room for the great gable motif that had played such a prominent role in the earlier tower plan. Perhaps because of the gable's iconographical significance, however, someone involved with the tower project appears to have insisted on its retention. The gable appears already in the plan drawing, but the difficulties in combining it with the buttress design become obvious only in the elevation. The lefthand tower buttresses are drawn carefully, and the gable form is only sketched in, creating an awkward intersection with the buttress at its lower left corner. The drawing appears to have been abandoned, in fact, when this problem became obvious. These issues had not yet been successfully resolved when Wenzel Parler died in 1404.

Peter Prachatitz, Wenzel Parler's assistant and successor, managed to brilliantly resolve the complex formal problems inherent in the design of



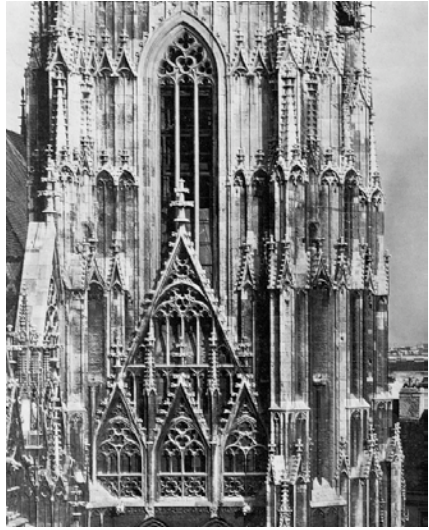
6-25 Vienna, Stephansdom, south tower.

the south tower, but the first years of his tenure as head of the Vienna workshop were tumultuous. Prachatitz appears to have realized early on that the design of the tower buttresses required substantial revision. His modifications to Wenzel Parler's design required the dismantling of several courses of masonry that had already been constructed in the belfry story. The chronicler Thomas Ebendorfer claims that this operation took place in 1407, but the surviving fabric records from that year show no such expenses. Indeed, work on the tower paused briefly in this period, which saw renewed conflict between the Albertine and Leopoldine branches of the Habsburg family. The death of Duke Albert IV in 1404 had left his young son Albert V isolated against the power of the Leopoldine faction, but the citizenry of Vienna rallied to support the boy, who represented the family's Viennese line. Albert V therefore had good reason to be grateful to the citizenry, and the consolidation of positive relations between the city and the duke helps to explain the rapid and successful completion of the south tower in the decades that followed.⁶⁹ The great belfry story, for example, stood complete by 1416 after a decade of rapid and efficient construction. It seems most probable, therefore, that the demolition noted by Ebendorfer took place in Peter Prachatitz's first years as master, in the chaotic period following the deaths of both Wenzel Parler and Albert IV.

Because Ebendorfer cited deviations from the plans of the first master as the reason for this dismantling operation, some Viennese scholars in the twentieth century have tried to argue that the present form of the Stephansdom tower reflects a complete reversion to the plans of the original Viennese master, but the many stylistic discrepancies between the various portions of the tower make this interpretation untenable. The Freiburg-like geometries seen in the early drawings for the south tower were never resurrected, and the present belfry, tower octagon and spire, all of which were designed by Peter Prachatitz, have a flickering complexity seen neither in fourteenth-century Viennese architecture nor in the work of Wenzel Parler. Once the integration of the gable had been accomplished, Peter Prachatitz was able to develop this style freely in rest of the belfry. The linear detailing of this story was carved in relief rather than being a free-standing openwork screen, but the belfry nevertheless conveys an impression of diaphanous verticality that contrasts with the plastic massiveness of the tower's comparatively squat lower stories (fig. 6-26). By varying the depth of the relief and exploiting the effects of light and shade, Prachatitz was able to subtly differentiate the central panel of the belfry from the side walls, adding to this overall vertical impression.

⁶⁹ Böker, "Stephansdom," 258-59, 290-97.

At the junction of the belfry story and tower octagon, Prachatitz screened each tower face with an overlapping pair of slender openwork gables. The apex of each gable stands immediately in front of one of the octagon's corner flanges, masking the already subtle transition from square to octagon. In effect, therefore, the double gables play the role originally intended for the great single gables below, whose form and symbolism they reinforce. Four large square-planned pinnacles, meanwhile occupy the corners of the square plan "left over" after the transition to the octagon. Both the form and the orientation of these corner pinnacles provide



6-26 Vienna, Stephansdom, belfry and great gable of south tower.

important information about the sources of Peter Prachatitz's design. Instead of looking back simply to Freiburg or to Prague, Prachatitz here seems to refer back to the more rectilinear forms of Cologne's Plan F.⁷⁰ In both Vienna and Cologne, the corner pinnacles evolve from a square section into a Greek-cross section through the shedding of square-planned sub-pinnacles. In elevation as well, Plan F seems to have been the model for the corner pinnacles of the Stephansdom, which reach to the base of the spire cone. The Viennese pinnacles transform more subtly in their upper sections than those of Plan F, but this hardly seems shocking since Prachatitz was working long after the Cologne design had been established.

One particularly telling aspect of the tower design at the Stephansdom is the way that Prachatitz coordinated the articulation of the four main corner pinnacles with that of the eight major buttress flanges comprising the wall structure of the octagonal tower story. In this way he effectively made the tower look like a fragile bundle of twelve almost identical pinnacles. Prachatitz further fostered this impression by placing the terminal gables of the tower core deep within the shadowed spaces between these flanges, so

⁷⁰ To state this more pedantically, he must have looked back to the orthogonal plan geometries that were surely intended in Plan F. Since Plan F is an elevation drawing, one must also refer to the Cologne choir. See Zykan, "Baugeschichte des Hochturms," 65.



6-27 Vienna, Stephansdom,
octagon and spire of south tower.

that their diagonal forms do not interfere with the surging verticality of the pinnacles around them. At Freiburg and Cologne, by contrast, the designers had chosen to emphasize tectonic clarity by differentiating frankly between the corner pinnacles and the body of the tower core, and by crowning the tower core with large, prominent gables. In these respects the Freiburg and Cologne designs look traditionally architectural, while the Vienna scheme begins to take on the character of a delicate micro-architectural shrine.

The narrow spire of the Stephansdom emerges rocketlike from a forest of twenty-eight pinnacles, all of which terminate at approximately the same height (fig. 6-27). This gives the structure its distinctive notched silhouette, which is quite unlike the more seamless profile achieved at Freiburg. The narrowness of the Viennese spire cone, moreover, effectively negates the idea of light and space flowing through the spire. The relative opacity of the Stephansdom spire cone contrasts dramatically with the effects of transparency pursued not only at Cologne and Freiburg, but also in the openwork spire projects undertaken by Ulrich von Ensingen, the most prolific spire designer of the early

fifteenth century. Since Peter Prachatitz was surely aware of at least the Cologne and Freiburg projects, his decision to pursue a different aesthetic must have been deliberate. Given the strongly micro-architectural character of the Vienna spire design as a whole, he may have chosen the narrow spire

format to achieve a closer formal resonance with the design of contemporary pinnacles and micro-architectural shrines. This idea could have been fostered by his contacts with the Parler workshop in Prague. Prachatitz would have seen the sacrament house in the Wenceslas Chapel, and he also surely knew about the Parlerian plan for a large tower with a narrow octagonal spire, which may well owe its presence in Vienna to the immigration of Wenzel Parler. He may also have been aware of the slender openwork spire of Meissen Cathedral, which, although far smaller than the one foreseen in Vienna, provided a relevant and relatively nearby example of the openwork spire type. Another possible influence on Prachatitz was the spiky spire design of Strasbourg Plan B, of which a fourteenth-century copy survives in Vienna. In Plan B, as in the present Stephansdom spire, a slender spire cone emerges suddenly from a wider zone of more complex articulation. In a very general sense, these designs anticipate the typical form of great spires in Flamboyant France, as exemplified by the north spire of Chartres.⁷¹ The links between Strasbourg, Vienna, and the later French schemes are tenuous, however. The slender spire format offered advantages that could easily have occurred to each designer independently. Most importantly, a slender structure could be taken to a greater height than a thick one on foundations and substructures of a given strength. This would have been of particular concern to Prachatitz, since the massive belfry story had been inserted above the earlier tower base precisely to raise the total height of the structure.

The articulation of the Stephansdom spire cone was as original as its silhouette. Two crowns of chevrons wrap around the spire, echoing the great gables lower on the tower. The lower vertices of these chevrons sit on the middle of the spire faces, rather than on the corner flanges. Pinnacles rise from the same point. The flanges thus pass under the chevrons and between the pinnacles. The crockets on the corner flanges are relatively small, as at Freiburg, but the Kreuzblume is wide, flattened like a giant waffle. The whole was originally crowned by metal spheres representing the sun and moon.⁷²

Peter Prachatitz did not quite live to see his masterpiece completed. He died in 1429, and the work was finished under the direction of his son

⁷¹ Other examples include the crossing spire of Évreux Cathedral, or the short-lived crossing spire of Beauvais Cathedral. The Tour de Beurre of Rouen Cathedral would have had a similar profile if its spire had been completed as intended. Related formats also occur in French Flamboyant micro-architectural canopies, including those of the choir screens of Chartres and Albi cathedrals.

⁷² See Perger and Brauneis, *Kirchen Wiens*, 56.

Hans in 1433.⁷³ Upon its completion, the 133-meter spire of the Stephansdom was the tallest stone spire yet built.⁷⁴ Although even more ambitious schemes were developed in the later Middle Ages, the only similar spire to exceed its height until the nineteenth century was that of Strasbourg, completed in 1439.⁷⁵ The successful construction of the Stephansdom's great spire was made possible by an alliance of brilliant artistry, lavish burgher donations, and the aristocratic pretensions of the Habsburgs, especially Rudolph IV. Happy confluences such as this were rare: in Cologne burgher support was lukewarm at best, in Ulm the tower foundations proved inadequate, and in Lübeck the merchant citizenry chose to settle for a simple pair of wood-and-metal cones to crown the colossal west facade of their Marienkirche. The completed spire of the Stephansdom boldly announced that Vienna was a powerful and cosmopolitan center belonging to the first rank of imperial cities. The spire was a proud monument whose scale, beauty, and visibility most other cities could only envy.

The favorable patronage climate of late medieval Vienna lasted long enough to ensure the completion of the Stephansdom's nave and south tower, but not quite long enough to permit the completion of the northern tower that was begun to match it. Scholars have long recognized the basic lines of this story, but Böker's revised picture of the Stephansdom's building history helps to clarify the relationship between these various major campaigns. Even his redating of the nave bears interestingly on the social meaning of the tower projects, for two principal reasons.⁷⁶ First, if he is correct that the nave was begun only in the years around 1400 rather than in the reign of Rudolph IV as most previous scholars had maintained, then the relative priority of the south tower project stands out in even sharper relief; work on the predominantly symbolic tower apparently preceded the inception of work on the more obviously useful nave by some four decades. Second, Böker's late dating of the nave implies that work on the nave project was moving forward rapidly in the first quarter of the fifteenth century, in the very years when the south spire was reaching its

⁷³ Although Hans is often presumed to be Peter's son, he may have been a brother or cousin. See Böker, "Stephansdom," 276.

⁷⁴ This height closely approximates 444 feet, while the length and width of the Stephansdom are roughly 333 and 222 feet, respectively. On this basis, Feuchtmüller proposes, in *Wiener Stephansdom*, 180-82, that the builders of the Stephansdom used a 111-foot module, equal to triple the 37-foot width of the nave aisles. More speculatively still, he suggests that the original height planned for the south tower might have been 333 feet. If an 111-foot module was honored by the first spire designers as well, the originally planned height of the spire might have been 333 feet.

⁷⁵ This statement must be phrased carefully, since the long-destroyed timber spires of Lincoln, Old Saint Paul's in London, and Beauvais cathedral were all in the 150-meter class.

⁷⁶ Böker, "Stephansdom," chapters 4 and 5.

full height. The fact that two such major projects could proceed simultaneously underlines the strong fiscal support that the Stephansdom enjoyed in this period. By the early sixteenth century, though, circumstances had changed enough to force the abandonment of the north tower project. In a sense, the north tower initiative was simply begun too late.

In his revisionist history of the Stephansdom, Böker argues convincingly that the designer most responsible for establishing the artistic direction of the north tower project was not Hans Puchsbaum, as formerly assumed, but rather Puchsbaum's successor Laurenz Spenning.⁷⁷ Puchsbaum, who headed the Stephansdom workshop between 1446 and 1454, was the builder in charge when the first stone of the north tower foundation was ceremonially laid in 1450. It was Spenning, however, who actually undertook construction of the above-ground phase of the tower in 1467. Spenning has usually been seen as the mere executor of Puchsbaum's intentions, but Böker demonstrates that many of the sophisticated designs formerly attributed to Puchsbaum, including the earliest surviving drawings for the north tower and spire, should actually be attributed to Spenning. Puchsbaum's solidly authenticated works, such as the spirelike *Spinnerin am Kreuz* he erected just south of Vienna's medieval city wall in 1452 (fig. 6-28), display an almost spartan simplicity and clarity of conception that contrasts with the textural richness of the Stephansdom tower design and other related projects, such as the great tribune loft



6-28, Vienna, *Spinnerin am Kreuz*.

⁷⁷ Here Böker, in "Stephansdom" chapters 4 and 5, argues largely against the tradition exemplified by Bruno Grimschitz, *Hanns Puchspaum* (Vienna, 1947).

in the Stephansdom nave, or the unexecuted facade scheme for Vienna City Hall.⁷⁸ Puchsbaum's *Spinnerin am Kreuz*, in fact, looks downright reactionary compared to the more elaborate one erected in Wiener Neustadt by Master Michael sixty years earlier.

According to Böker, Puchsbaum's contributions to the Stephansdom were confined to several starkly articulated components of the building, including most notably the walls above the nave arcade and the upper portion of the west facade, with its simple pyramidal tower terminations. In the design of these short spirelets, Puchsbaum subtly referred to the articulation of the south spire by placing rows of crockets along the middles of the flat pyramid facets as well as along the corners between them, but in most respects Puchsbaum's spirelets harmonized more closely with the Romanesque portions of the west facade than they did with the extravagantly complicated south spire. Despite having broken ground for the Stephansdom's great north tower, therefore, Puchsbaum seems to have engaged with the legacy of the south tower's design only obliquely, leaving the more detailed planning for the north tower to his successor Spenning.

Like the earlier south tower project, the north tower project grew in response to both Habsburg initiative and burgher support. Most of the funding came from the citizenry, and the fabric committee remained under civic control. The key aristocratic figure in the picture, meanwhile, was Albert V's distant cousin Frederick Habsburg, who was named King of the Romans following Albert V's death in battle against the Turks, and who subsequently reigned as Emperor Frederick III from 1452 to 1493. Frederick has often been criticized as a weak and ineffectual ruler, but his long reign proved instrumental in establishing the enduring and pan-European importance of the Habsburg dynasty. Initially, Frederick's power in Vienna rested mostly on his role as the guardian of Albert's young son Ladislav Posthumus. In an attempt to connect with the native Viennese legacy of rulers such as Rudolph IV, however, Frederick actively promoted the construction of the Stephansdom, and he sought its elevation to cathedral status, eventually realizing this goal in 1469. His most active involvement with the Stephansdom project appears to have come in two principal waves, which not surprisingly coincide with his two most successful periods of residency in Vienna, in the years around 1450 and in the years around 1470. King Frederick and Vienna's mayor Conrad Holtzer presided together, joined by other dignitaries, at the ceremony on 13 August, 1450, where Hans Puchsbaum laid the first stone of the north

⁷⁸ Böker, "Stephansdom," 522, 541.

tower.⁷⁹ Puchsbaum's roughly contemporary additions to the Stephansdom's west facade and his raising of the building's central nave vessel above its side aisles were meant at least in part, Böker believes, to make the church a suitable site for royal entries.⁸⁰

The political situation in the 1450s and early 1460s prevented Frederick III from engaging substantively with the north tower project in the fifteen years after its foundation. Returning from his imperial coronation in Rome in 1452, Frederick was temporarily besieged by rebel guildsmen in Wiener Neustadt. In Vienna itself, the guilds challenged Frederick's authority by recognizing the majority of his young ward Ladislav Posthumus. Ladislav died just five years later, but Frederick then had to confront the opposition of his own brother Albert VI, who had the support of both the Viennese citizenry and many princes in the empire. Albert's death in 1463 did not immediately solve Frederick's problems, since the Viennese city government then revolted against his authority, led by the same mayor Conrad Holtzer who had participated in the first foundation ceremony for the north tower in 1450. Only after the suppression of the rebellion, and the execution of Holtzer, was imperial control over Vienna reasserted.

It was in the following period of rapprochement between Frederick and the city that the north tower project finally got underway in earnest. On 23 December, 1466, Frederick dedicated 4 pounds of tax revenue per week to the Stephansdom fabric fund, inaugurating a tradition of imperial donation that would last well into the sixteenth century. On 2 June, 1467, the cornerstone of the north tower proper was laid by Passau's Bishop Ulrich von Nussdorf, who was then serving as Frederick's imperial chancellor. In the same year, the citizens of Vienna appealed to Frederick's wife Eleanor, hoping that she could induce her husband to once again make Vienna his capital. She died soon thereafter, but Frederick did return to the city beginning on 4 December 1469, seven years to the day after he had been driven from the besieged Hofburg. In the same year, Frederick finally succeeded in achieving the promotion of the Stephansdom to cathedral status, a promotion that had been sought by the Habsburgs since the days of Rudolph IV.⁸¹ There was never a rigid rule that cathedrals had to have two towers, or that parish churches could have only one, but the beginning of rapid construction on the Stephansdom's north tower appears to have been closely tied in with the establishment of Vienna as an episcopal city and imperial residence.

⁷⁹ Böker, "Stephansdom," 493-94.

⁸⁰ Böker, "Stephansdom," 363-68, 386-88.

⁸¹ Böker, "Stephansdom," 497-99.

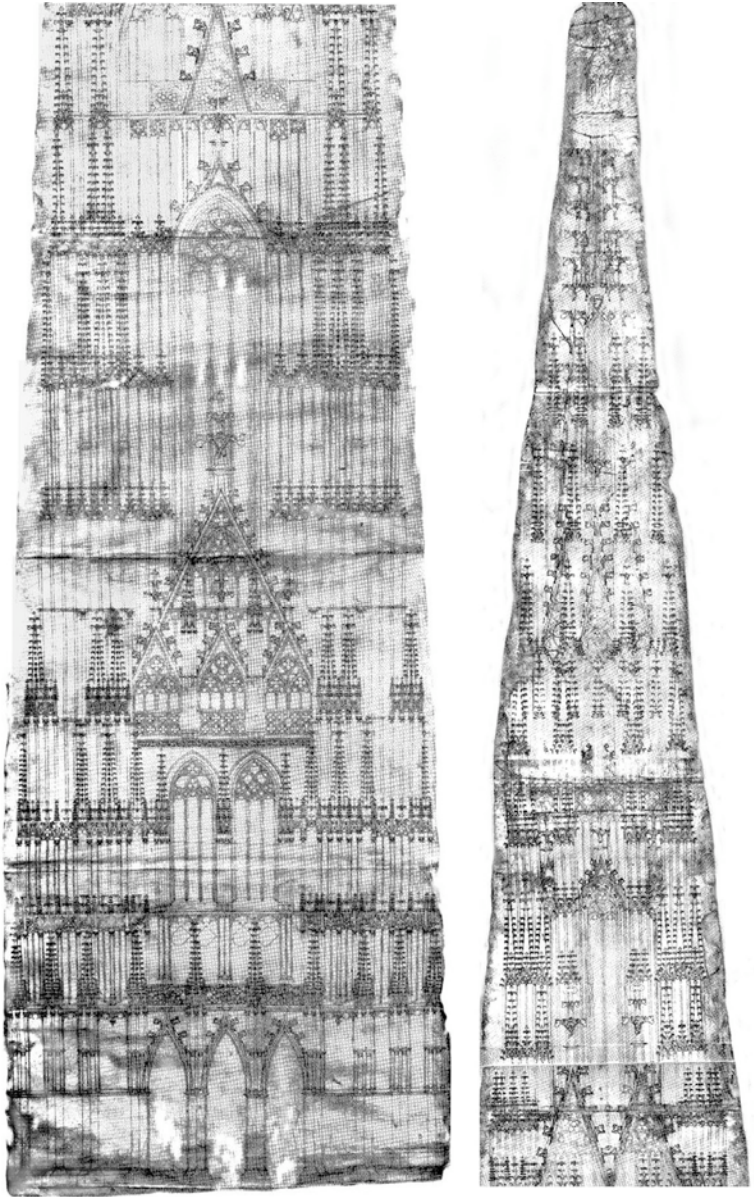


6-29 Vienna,
Stephansdom, first
north tower scheme.

Because many original medieval drawings related to the north tower survive, the successive phases of the project can be traced in some detail. The most impressive documents to survive from the Stephansdom workshop are the elevation drawings, each over four meters high, that record two alternative visions of the complete tower and spire ensemble (figs. 6-29, 6-30, and 6-31).⁸² The earlier south tower obviously served as the point of departure for both schemes, but the north tower designs differ from this prototype in a number of crucial respects. First, and most obviously, these drawings show that the north tower was being conceived as a cohesive unit, without the disjunctions of style that resulted in the south tower from the succession of different masters. Second, the drawings show that the north tower was going to be covered with a richly decorative but largely uniform surface of tracery panels, very similar to that seen in Spenning's designs, such as the scheme for Vienna City Hall. Third, the drawings both feature elaborated spire zones, in which the spire cone proper nearly disappears behind a veil of pinnacles, gables, and other decorative motifs. For all these reasons, the northern tower-spire complex foreseen in these drawings would have appeared bulkier and more plastic than its southern counterpart. At the same time, the veiling of the spire cone behind surging verticals would have given the north spire an even more strongly micro-architectural flavor than the south spire.

The relative dating of the two north tower elevation schemes has long proven controversial, but a variety of factors suggest that the design with the more smoothly tapering profile of pinnacle tiers is probably the older of the two. In this scheme, the double-window story just above the tower porch

⁸² One of the complete spire designs survives in a single drawing, Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien, 105067 (Koepp 287). The second survives in two drawings: Akademie der bildenden Künste, 17061 (Koepp 246) and Museum der Stadt Wien, 105062 (Koepp 282). See Böker, "Stephansdom," 499-511; and Recht, *Bâtisseurs*, 412, for earlier bibliography.



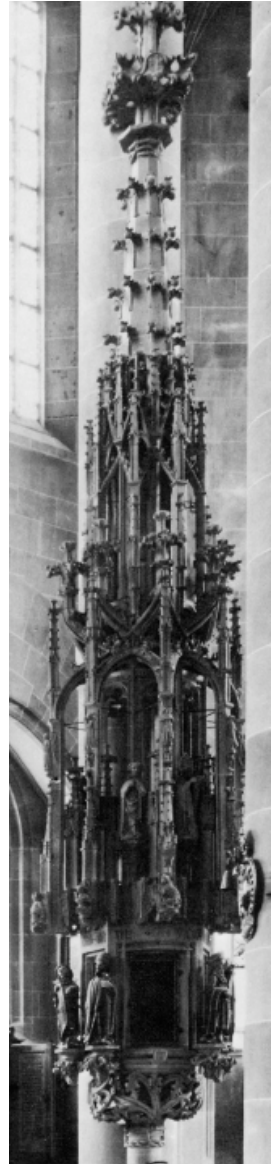
6-30a & b Vienna, Stephansdom, first north tower scheme.



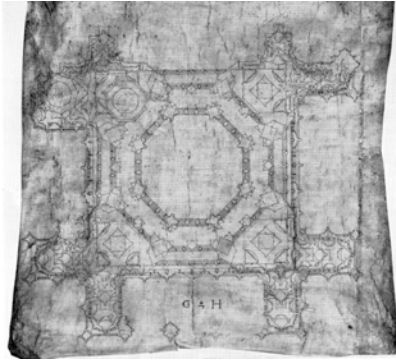
6-31a & b Vienna, Stephansdom, second north tower scheme.

still has the same proportions seen in the south tower. In the second scheme, though, this story stretches higher, as it does in the present north tower. As a result, the upper margin of this story as built overshoots the eaves of the Stephansdom's nave and choir walls, underlining the greater autonomy of the north tower from the body of the church. The fact that this stretching was not yet foreseen in the tapering design suggests that it was the earlier of the two schemes, in which the proportions of the south tower had not yet been rejected. Analysis of the upper portions of the two alternative designs strengthens this relative dating. The tapering scheme derives fairly directly from the south spire. In this drawing, though, the gables and minor pinnacles that had clustered inconspicuously around the base of the south spire were pulled upwards, and two more tiers of pinnacles were added to form a telescoping decorative sheath around the spire cone. The straight-sided gable format of the south tower was here rejected in favor of a subtly concave format, but the ogee arch does not yet figure prominently in the articulation of the tapering spire scheme.

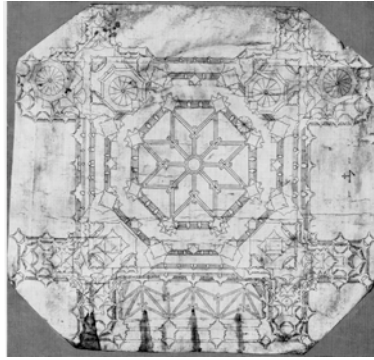
The second of the complete north tower designs incorporates a range of new decorative elements in the spire zone, including a large frontally placed ogee arch, a traceried balustrade wrapping around the spire cone, and a dramatic wreath of interlacing ogee arches that grows out of this balustrade before terminating in a crown of swaying pinnacles. The interlaced arch motif had been introduced to central European Gothic design by the Parler workshop, in structures such as the south transept arch of Prague Cathedral. Laurenz Spinning had used such arches on a smaller scale to articulate the elaborately decorated upper wall surfaces of the



6-32 Schwäbisch Hall, St. Michael, sacrament house.



6-33a Vienna, Stephansdom, first north tower plan.



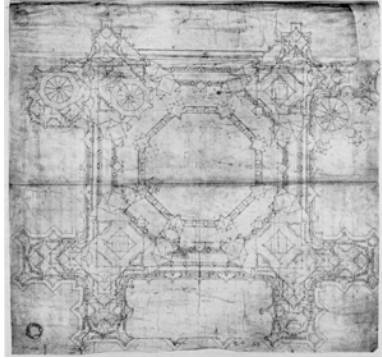
6-33b Vienna, Stephansdom, second north tower plan.

Stephansdom's north tower portal and chapel, whose construction was probably simultaneous with the development of the overall tower elevations. In that case, though, Spenning's arches were confined to the plane of the wall, rather than rising freely in three dimensions. The closest analogs to the ogee wreath seen in the drawing, in fact, appear in the realm of micro-architecture. The mid-fifteenth-century sacrament house of St. Michael in Schwäbisch Hall provides a good early example of this type (fig. 6-32), which would be elaborated even further in the decades around 1500. The interlacing wreath of the Stephansdom drawing therefore stands out as one of the most explicitly micro-architectural motifs ever deployed in a full-scale spire design. In its Viennese context, though, this wreath should probably be understood as a late Gothic updating of the zigzag crown motif seen in the Stephansdom's nave gables and south tower, with its connotations of Habsburg authority.⁸³

The most telling argument for the late dating of the second tower scheme is that its upper portions are geometrically and spatially incoherent, suggesting that they were drawn up after Spenning's death by someone with no real understanding of his task. The most obvious anomaly involves the spire's upper balustrade, which is rendered with all of its openwork tracery visible, as if it were standing in front of the pinnacles at that level. This would imply a truly bizarre ground plan, with the pinnacles somehow tucking behind the balustrade rather than rising prominently in front of it as regular octagonal symmetry would imply. The balustrade also seems to cantilever out from a mastlike vertical element

⁸³ Böker, "Stephansdom," 514, 531.

below, because the diagonal lines that would continue the spire cone below this level seem to have been left out. Other lines simply peter out, so that upper portions of the spire seem to hang in midair. The draftsman responsible for this zone of the drawing thus appears to have had no real understanding of how his work might relate to a genuine three-dimensional structure. By contrast, the more smoothly tapering drawing beautifully and accurately describes a plausible spire design, whose successive tiers of pinnacles echo the



6-33c Vienna, Stephansdom, third north tower plan.

rhythms established in the repetitive cladding of the lower spire zone, and in many of Spenning's other works. It seems likely, therefore, that the tapering design was developed by Spenning himself. In the second drawing, however, motifs such as the interlaced arch explode into a prominence that they had never achieved in Spenning's known works, and the geometrical and formal logic of the spire design as a whole breaks down. This scheme, therefore, was probably drawn by one of Spenning's former assistants in an unsuccessful attempt to elaborate on the dead master's vision.

The existence of three plan drawings for the north tower lends support to this hypothetical narrative (figs. 6-33 a-c). One of the plans, probably the first of the three, resembles the plan of the south tower in including just a single stair turret for access to the upper tower. A closely related plan drawing shows a second stair turret, carefully and organically integrated into the buttress at the tower's southwestern corner, adjacent to the nave. This expensive solution appears to have been rejected before the third plan was made, since the second turret in this final version is an essentially autonomous cylinder like the one built into the present tower (fig. 6-34).⁸⁴ Significantly, the central zone of this third drawing is not as carefully detailed as the other two, and the ribs of the octagonal star vault under the spire are not shown. This suggests that the drawing was commissioned

⁸⁴ Böker, "Stephansdom," 504-6. Two of these drawings are Historische Museum der Stadt Wien, 105063 and 105064 (Koepl, 283 and 284). The third is Akademie der bildenden Künste 16872R (Koepl 57R). The Akademie's half-plan 16820 (Koepl 5) has often been associated with the north tower, but its buttress format matches that of the south tower, suggesting that it may well record a late phase in Peter Prachatitz's design process.



6-34 Vienna, Stephansdom, north tower.

principally to shown the definitive location of the stair turret, and that the original author of the drawing saw no need to once again describe the spire zone. In this central area, however, blind lines describe small pentagons on the cardinal axes. In location, they vaguely recall the stair turrets of the Strasbourg spire, and in form they recall the plans of some small micro-architectural canopies, but they cannot be easily interpreted within the context of any plausible plan for the north spire of the Stephansdom.

Indeed, they look more like nonsensical doodles than like the records of a careful planning process. In this general sense, they recall the incoherent middle zone of the spire seen in the second elevation drawing, although the pentagons fail utterly to describe the structures sketched in that drawing. The carefully detailed central zones of the two earlier plan drawings, meanwhile, correspond precisely to the forms seen in the tapering tower elevation. It seems likely, therefore, that Spenning first developed the elegantly tapering elevation drawing to give an overall impression of his design, and that he then worked through a variety of closely related ground plans to establish the location of the stair turrets before construction began. The incoherent elements seen in the second tower elevation, and those sketched into the final ground plan, can best be interpreted as late additions by one of his rather confused former assistants.

Construction of the north tower proceeded in substantial conformity with Spenning's intentions into the first quarter of the sixteenth century, although a number of modifications crept into the work as it progressed (fig. 6-35). Spenning himself directed the work until his death in 1477, by which time the tower portal and adjacent chapel stood complete. His successor Simon Achleiter remained faithful to Spenning's plans, completing most of second story of the tower and the interior tower hall before his own death in 1488. By that time Frederick III had been driven from Vienna by the Hungarian King Matthias Corvinus, who occupied the city from 1485 to 1490. Frederick's promises of aid to the Viennese proved to be largely empty, and he never returned to the city even after the death of Matthias Corvinus. The positive confluence of Habsburg and civic interests that had pertained in the 1470s thus proved to be fairly fragile.⁸⁵ Because the city rather than the emperor provided most of the money for work on the Stephansdom, work on the north tower proceeded at a respectable pace under the direction of Jörg Kling, who served as master of the Vienna workshop from 1488 to 1506. Kling must have realized that the stretched proportions of the tower, together with the originally intended slope of its great gables, would raise the gable tips of the tower awkwardly above the tips of the corresponding nave gables. He therefore adjusted the slope of the tower gable downwards. This revision, although embodying a departure from Spenning's plans, suggests that Kling had a fundamentally conservative approach to design, and that he cared more about harmonizing with extant work than about forging his own path. His successor, Jörg Öchsl, master from 1506 to 1510, brought a far more adventurous approach to the treatment of details, although he too apparently intended to bring the

⁸⁵ Böker, "Stephansdom," 554-70.

height of the north tower into conformity with that of its southern prototype. Öchsl's crews constructed the upper portions of the great tower gables, with their complex curvilinear tracery forms, and they raised the belfry story to just over half its intended height.⁸⁶ These, as it turned out, were the last components of the tower to be built with the spire plan still in mind.

The north tower project in Vienna eventually succumbed to a mixture of problems that together eroded the enthusiasm and funding necessary for its construction. Questions of individual artistic identity may have played some role in this process, since Öchsl's successor Anton Pilgram worked primarily as a sculptor rather than as an architect. Funding problems, however, were surely the most important factor in the abandonment of the north tower project. Pilgram's successor Gregor Hauser clearly took an interest in the tower project, as the presence of his seal on many of the tower-related drawings attests, but he and his crews were forced to spend much of their time and energy on repairs to the south tower, which had been struck by lightning. Pope Leo X granted an indulgence to benefit the north tower project in 1514, and building committee records from 1523 show that completion of the north tower was contemplated even at that point, but the Viennese patronage climate of the 1520s and 1530s effectively prevented the resumption of work.⁸⁷ Frederick III's son, the chronically indebted Emperor Maximilian, was unable to contribute significantly to the project, even though he may have wished to establish the Stephansdom as his mausoleum. The most important civic building project in this period, moreover, was the construction of urban fortifications. The times were becoming dangerous, not only because of the chaos unleashed by the Reformation and the Peasant Rebellion, but also because of the steadily growing threat of Turkish invasion.⁸⁸ The city government's decision to emphasize security turned out to be wise, since the new walls allowed Vienna to weather the Turkish siege of 1529. The soaring south spire built by Peter and Hans Prachatz, moreover, already gave Vienna a dramatic civic landmark, a fact that probably made the completion of the north spire seem like an expensive luxury.

Between 1556 and 1578, the architects Kaspar and Hans Saphoy terminated the north tower with a small octagonal turret and domed copper cap, effectively sealing the fate of the Stephansdom spire project. The

⁸⁶ These complex forms match those in Museum der Stadt Wien, 105061 (Koepf 281), which Böker attributes to Öchsl, along with the Stephansdom's famous organ pulpit, northwest portal porch, and northwest interior baldachin. Böker, "Stephansdom," 570, 576-80.

⁸⁷ Böker, "Stephansdom," 587-88.

⁸⁸ Perger and Brauneis, *Kirchen Wiens*, 60-61.

Saphoys deliberately chose to invoke the Gothic tradition by using pointed arches rather than the newly fashionable Italianate Renaissance mode in this project, but the departure from the grandiose visions of the fifteenth-century spire designers proves jarring nevertheless. Even at this point, the north tower retained symbolic significance for the Habsburgs, serving as the landing site for a tethered eagle released from the south tower on the occasion of Emperor Maximilian II's coronation in 1563, and gaining its present name, the "Eagle Tower" after the subsequent installation on its summit of a great metal weathervane shaped like the imperial eagle.⁸⁹ The major additions to the Stephansdom over the next two hundred years would be Baroque altars and interior furnishings. The church and its spire remained the principal symbolic monuments of the city, but serious study and restoration of its Gothic fabric was not undertaken until the nineteenth century. Interestingly, the Neo-Gothic architect Friedrich von Schmidt's proposal to complete the north tower was rejected amid concerns that the presence of a second spire might interfere with the aesthetic effectiveness of the south spire, which had served for centuries that the city's visual and symbolic axis.⁹⁰

The history of the Viennese spire projects, and the history of aristocratically-initiated spire projects in the eastern empire more generally, illustrates both the importance and the limitations of princely patronage in spire construction. Aristocrats such as the Habsburgs played a crucial role in fostering the spread of advanced architectural ideas into the eastern provinces. The small Habsburg-sponsored spires of Strassengel and Gaming, for example, were among the first concrete responses to the openwork spire concept pioneered at Cologne and Freiburg. Rudolph IV's far more ambitious tower project at the Stephansdom, meanwhile, established a high standard for spire planning that Charles IV and the Parler circle at Prague could hardly afford to ignore. In this context, it is not surprising that Wilhelm Wettin's reign saw the addition of an openwork spire to Meissen Cathedral. The Meissen spire deserves note as the first openwork spire added to a true cathedral, and it also ranks as one of the first spires to incorporate decorative flying buttresses like those seen in contemporary micro-architectural shrines. Significantly, though, the Meissen spire was relatively small, and it was the only masonry spire to be completed at the cathedral in the Middle Ages, since the attention of the Wettins increasingly turned to the elaboration of their nearby palace. The same drift towards palace construction also manifested itself in Prague

⁸⁹ Böker, "Stephansdom," 588-95.

⁹⁰ Böker, "Stephansdom," 212.

around 1500, eighty years after the alienation of the Czech citizenry and the outbreak of the Hussite Wars had brought the construction of Prague Cathedral to a standstill. It was only in Vienna, where burgher pride helped to fuel the construction of the Stephansdom, that a truly colossal openwork spire could be completed in the eastern empire by the end of the Gothic era. Ironically, the fact that Rudolph IV had to adopt Vienna's main parish church as the architectural vehicle of his political program rather than constructing a brand-new church like Prague Cathedral may have been precisely the factor that insured the glory of the tower project that he began. Important as aristocratic initiative could be, truly major spire projects depended on the financial support of wealthy mercantile communities. Indeed, the greatest flourishing of spire construction in the later Middle Ages took place in the southwestern provinces of the empire, where spires tended to proclaim the pride of free cities rather than aristocrats.