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Chromolithographed history: brands' trade cards and the co-construction of the French
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Abstract

Purpose – The paper studies how several brands like *Poulain*, *Liebig* and *Guérin* have helped to disseminate the French *roman national* through their chromolithographs at the beginning of the 20th century. By doing so, the paper highlights the participation of brands in the co-construction of the French *roman national*, a historical narrative that articulates state-supported collective memories.

Design/methodology/approach – 1,106 historical trade cards have been collected and analyzed. Historical studies of the *roman national* have been used as secondary sources to aid in the interpretation of the motifs conveyed in those chromolithographs.

Findings – Chromolithographic images produced by various brands at the beginning of the 20th century contributed to the *roman national*. They provide an ethnocentric, patriotic and linear view of history but are also crossed by political fault lines, opposing secular and Catholic visions of history.

Originality/value – The chromolithographs produced and disseminated by companies have so far only been analyzed as promotional tools, aimed at popularizing brands and stores. By studying *roman national* motifs, this article helps us understand what role businesses have played in building other narratives and forging a national spirit.

Keywords Branding history, Advertising, France, *roman national*, Chromolithograph, Trade cards

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The relationship of companies and brands to history is diverse and complex. Many brands use history to fuel their storytelling. That way they can strengthen their brand image and present themselves as the heirs of great traditions. Companies have otherwise used historical figures in their advertisements, to be part of a shared inheritance (for an overview of these uses in the French context, see Amalvi, 2013).

In this article, we look at the problem from another angle: we question not how companies use history to enrich their own image, but how these companies help to create a national imagination.

From the end of the 19th century in France, multiple companies disseminated historical images through chromolithographs. Chromolithographs, or trade cards, were colored pictures printed using lithography. They were one of the most ubiquitous forms of advertising at the turn of the century. The dissemination of these historical images took place in a particularly chauvinistic context. The teaching of history in France at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries was marked by the *roman national*¹, a state-supported narrative aimed at strengthening national unity, faith in Republican ideals and a spirit of revenge against Germany, following the 1870 defeat of France against this country.

For a company, at the turn of the 20th century, printing chromolithographic images about history had important political implications. By sticking to the themes of the *roman national*, a brand could fit into dominant ideological frameworks, but it could also alienate itself from markets and consumers. Our article questions this delicate balance by studying how companies have helped weave a national historical narrative. In which ways did the companies' trade cards help convey the *roman national*? To answer this question, we collected and analyzed 1,106 historical trade cards.

The paper is structured as follows. First, we explain how chromolithographed trade cards have been analyzed as consumer training tools in past research and how they can be used to study the historical representations disseminated by companies. Next, we specify how we can define the *roman national* and describe the way our data sample was collected and analyzed. We then describe the results of our analysis by stating that chromolithographic images produced by various brands at the beginning of the 20th century are consistent with the *roman national*, and are crossed by political fault lines, opposing secular and Catholic visions of history. The concluding section summarizes and discusses our findings.

¹ *Roman national* can be literally translated as “national novel”. However, as this expression has no real equivalent in the English language, we will keep using the expression in its original form in this article.

Chromolithographed trade cards and the construction of imaginaries

Numerous studies have shown how the new media of the late 19th century helped build a culture of consumption. Iqani (2012, p. 20) explained how media texts are public artefacts that made a large set of commodities, subjects and ideas visible and that symbolic messages are central to consumerist communication. Ewen and Ewen (1992) described new media as a basic source of Americanization that magnified ideals of consumption, motion, beauty and dress. According to Matt (2002, p. 101), end-of-the-century farm folks and small-town dwellers acquired a greater knowledge of urban life and were able to compare themselves to an external standard. This new regime of visibility could have been the cause of identity anxiety and greater pressure put on the individual (Ballaster et alii, 1991).

Drawing from the Andersonian concept of “imagined communities” (Anderson, 1983), several authors (Ballaster et alii, 1991; Iqani, 2012; Loeb, 1994; Ohmann, 1996; Schwartz, 1998) have described how new media have greatly contributed to the emergence of a global consumer culture. Unconnected spectators were able to participate in a virtual community. They shared experiences, gathered around the same images and texts. As Loeb (1994, p. 130) put it, they “bought the same products, shared the same taste, experienced the same material universe, were connected. They understood each other, rationally and emotionally, although separated by geographic distance. (...) By the late nineteenth century these factors formed a more significant commonality than mere physical proximity”.

Some researchers (Garvey, 1996; Black, 2017) have pointed out that chromolithographic trade cards played a fundamental role in constructing a consumption culture. According to Jay (1983, p. 3), the trade card was the most ubiquitous form of advertising in America during the 1880s. Garvey (1996, p. 19) considers trade cards as a “precursor to magazine advertising”, whereas Black (2017, p. 6) asserts that we should avoid any teleological reasoning and keep in mind that trade cards “did more than foreshadow the expansion of colorful advertising in magazines at the turn of the twentieth century”.

Trade cards, also called “exchange cards” or “chromolithographs”, refer to little cards imprinted with colorful, popular and entertaining images displaying various items and themes like manufactured objects, flower ornamentation, portraits or allegories. The chromolithographic process developed at the beginning of the 19th century but became widely used only after 1870, as printing techniques improved and the production costs dropped drastically (Black, 2017; Piola, 2014). As chromolithographic printing was cheap, it was widely used by various enterprises to make their brand and their products known to the public. Thus, trade cards were very often engraved with the brand name and often the advertising slogan of a retailer or a manufacturer. Chromolithographs were distributed by these companies at different locations, like shops and grocery stores, and also inserted with some packaged products.

Trade cards were very useful marketing tools for a variety of reasons. They helped department stores like the *Bon Marché*² to make their monumental stores known (Miller, 1981). They increased brand recognition by allowing manufacturers to communicate directly with consumers and therefore to emancipate themselves from local store owners (Strasser, 1989). Widely distributed, these images induced the practice of collecting among children. Trade cards became important objects of personal expression during the last quarter of the 19th century. They were exchanged among friends, collected and arranged in scrapbooks. According to Garvey (1996, p. 17), chromolithographs trained children and teenagers “as future consumers and naturalized the developing discourse of advertising”. Garvey (1996) studied end-of-the-century scrapbooks and noticed that they were key to the construction of a culture of consumption among the new generations. “As young people, scrapbook compilers were apprentice shoppers, entering the discourse of consumption and learning to converse within it and respond to its conventions and imperatives” (Garvey, 1996, p. 18). Collecting notably taught children to recognize product categories, brand names, commercial claims, narratives and slogans. Interacting with this advertising medium, children learned to “fantasize within it” and to take “psychic ownership” of products, explains Garvey (1996, p.26 and 48).

However, chromolithographs were also used to fuel the imagination for more than merchandise. They propagated different images and fantasies than those of stores and products. The chromolithographs of the period show us that the themes addressed were varied. In his study, Black (2017) noted that the most popular depictions in America were those of children at play, floral compositions and caricatures of immigrants and African Americans. In France, chromolithographs very often portrayed famous people, heraldry, crafts, allegories, tales and sketches. Of all the trade cards produced, few actually directly and visually refer to products or stores. Brands have thus contributed to exposing many objects and activities outside the commercial sphere. In France, a significant part of the chromolithographs in fact depicted historical scenes and figures. While researchers have studied the role of chromolithographs in the construction of a consumer culture (Garvey, 1996), they have paid little attention to the role played by chromolithographs in the construction of historical representations. What vision of history have companies disseminated? Did the trade cards they produce correspond to the stories children learned in school? Before going any further, we must present the role of history in French education at the beginning of the 20th century.

The French *roman national*

The *roman national* is a historical narrative that articulates state-supported collective memories (Berg and Christou, 2020, p. 83). It was forged by French Republicans, when they came to power after the 1870 defeat against Prussia. Political leaders of the Third Republic (1870-1940) were convinced that Prussia won the 1870 war because it instilled in the

² *Le Bon Marché* is one of the first French modern department stores. It was founded in 1838 and modernized in 1852 under the management of Aristide Boucicaut.

Germanic populations the sacred love of the fatherland and the desire for German unity. School was thus perceived by the French as a key element to prepare the revenge war. The *roman national* was also instrumental in convincing the new generations of the legitimacy of the Republic and in fighting the partisans of the *Ancien Régime* (Citron, 1987; Bauvois-Cauchepin, 2002).

The term *roman national* was invented quite recently by historian Pierre Nora (1992) and rapidly took root in French historiography to describe how history was taught during the Third Republic. Under the new regime, history was taught at every step of the French three-stage educational system. The most influential figure who participated in the construction of the French *roman national* was Ernest Lavissee (Amalvi, 2013; Berg and Christou, 2020). Historian, professor, director of *l'École normale*, Lavissee wrote several textbooks. His *Histoire de France: Cours élémentaire* [History of France: Elementary course] (1884) was certainly the most widely taught history manual among French school children (Provencher and Eilderts, 2007, p. 32). Lavissee published 19 school manuals between 1876 and 1922. It is estimated that 630 editions of these books were printed during this time (Bourdon, 2017, pp. 14-16). However, Lavissee's books were not the only best-sellers to spread the *roman national*: over 1 million copies of the *Cours élémentaire d'histoire de France [Elementary course in French history]* by Gauthier and Deschamps circulated between 1905 and 1926 and 6 million copies of Bruno's *Le Tour de la France par deux enfants [Two Childrens' Tour of France]* (1877) were sold between 1877 and 1901 (Amalvi, 1979; Citron, 1987, p.38).

All of these books and most of the textbooks published at that time were vectors of ideas and morals that are typical of what French historians call the *roman national*. The history of France as it was told by the *roman national* can be described as ethnocentric, linear, teleological, partial, patriotic and organicist (see table I for a detailed assessment).

Table I. The attributes of the French *roman national*

According to the historiographical literature (Amalvi, 1979; Bauvois-Cauchepin, 2002; Bourdon, 2017; Citron, 1987), we can describe the French *roman national* according to six attributes.

Ethnocentric - History taught under the Third Republic is exclusively the history of France. The periods when the French nation and national ideology did not exist, like Roman antiquity and ancient Greece, are reinvented and nationalized. France is placed at the center of European and world history; its role is described as civilizing, salutary and messianic. The history of other European countries is treated incidentally and the rest of the world is considered like "the edge of humanity" (Bauvois-Cauchepin, 2002, p. 274).

Linear – History takes place in a linear Judeo-Christian time. Relating the history of France is equivalent to recounting the succession of its sovereigns. Monarchs and great leaders play a prophetic role that is celebrated and chanted like a biblical story. History is personified and dramatized. Every historical character is defined according to Manichean oppositions. Kings are described as either good or bad. For example, Louis IX is often depicted as good and generous and Louis XI as vulgar, ugly and tyrannical.

Teleological – History is told as if it was pointing towards the present time. It describes the perpetual rebirth and triumph of an eternal nation. The legitimacy of the conquests is never questioned because history is an annunciation. Everything is going on according to a salutary and prophetic plan known in advance. The country's history is like a transcendent and eternal reality, a divine providence.

Partial - The history of certain events and populations is systematically avoided. Episodes like the devastation of the Palatinate, the *Reign of Terror* or the Dreyfus affair are euphemized or ignored. The country is described as if it is and always has been an invariant and unified space. Histories of regional people like Occitans, Bretons, Bearneses, Corsicans or Savoyards are ignored, just like those of religious and ethnic minorities.

Patriotic – History is imbued with nationalistic, moralistic and militaristic values. It is explicitly used to train children to be good citizen-soldiers. The historical enemies of France – England, Germany – are described as vile and despicable. The great French military victories like The Battle of Tolbiac or the Battle of Roncevaux Pass are celebrated. Legendary warrior figures like Joan of Arc, Bertrand du Guesclin or the Chevalier de Bayard are honored and cherished for their exploits and their sacrifice.

Organicist - The nation is presented as a whole whose members fulfill a precise and necessary function. History celebrates sacred union, order and civic duty. Work and productivity, rather than power and class relations, are revered as what drives the march of history. Explorers, scientists and colonizers are honored for their contribution to national prestige.

The promoters of the *roman national* bet on the new imaging technologies of this time to implement their historical representations. According to Amalvi (1979), most of the textbooks of the Third Republic were a series of annotated lithographs. Grandiloquent and emphatic drawings were intended to impress children, to strike their imaginations. The history manual was seen as "the family album of all French people" (Amalvi, 1979, p. 29).

Can we date the end of the *roman national*? Some researchers (Loubes, 2013) think that it became less patriotic and more pacifist when the Popular Front (an alliance of political parties that was aimed at resisting fascism) came to power in 1936. However, according to Citron (1987), the history of France as taught at school remained rather faithful to the *roman national* at least until the 1980s. Although curricula and textbooks were reformed to a great extent during the 1980s, De Cock and Picard (2009) explain that the attributes of the *roman national* remain very present in contemporary French school and society. The question of historiographical continuity is debatable, but it seems at least quite clear that the *roman national* was prevalent throughout the Third Republic (1870-1940).

As many historians have shown (Amalvi, 1979; Bauvois-Cauchepin, 2002; Bourdon, 2017; Citron, 1987), the *roman national* developed through the textbooks and school curricula of the nascent Republic. In this article, we question the inference of the *roman national* in the promotional materials disseminated by brands. Did the company trade cards correspond to the

roman national taught to children through those textbooks? Next, we discuss the methodological procedure we adopted to answer this question.

Sources and method

We collected 1,106 chromolithographs from 8 specialized stores hosted on the consumer-to-consumer collector platform Delcampe. Delcampe.net is a marketplace founded in 2000 where collectibles can be sold at auction or at a fixed price. Our database included all chromolithographs featuring characters, events or scenes from the past. We excluded from our sample religious, mythological and holy scenes, as well as images illustrating fictional, literary and musical works. The eight stores were identified via Delcampe's internal search engine, by typing in the key words "histoire chromo" and by browsing the trade cards category. We stopped our data collection when we reached a saturation point, that is when more than 80% of the chromolithographs reviewed in the new collections had already been archived in our database.

We collected chromolithographs dating from 1900 to 1930. Although the first advertising chromolithographs in France appeared in the middle of the 19th century, their production only really intensified at the beginning of the 20th century. We eliminated chromolithographs issued after 1939, the end of the 1930s marking a turning point in the history of the *roman national*, as described in the previous section (Loubes, 2013).

Since no established categorization system for trade cards corresponding to our research questions could be found in the literature, we carried out an inductive or "emerging" coding, by drawing up a list of *a posteriori* categories (Drisko and Maschi, 2015). We created categories "when the number of messages with the same characteristic justified it" (De Bonville, 2006, p. 160). We recorded attributes on our sample of 1,106 cards, noting the following items:

1. Brand name (identified by copyright, trademark, or other relevant information on the card).
2. Country (when the chromolithograph depicts a scene that can clearly be related to a national history).
3. Time/Century (when the chromolithograph depicts a scene that can be dated).
4. Type of person represented (leader, soldier, artist, explorer, philosopher, etc.).
5. Names of the persons represented (when they can be clearly identified).

To demonstrate our coding procedure, an example has been provided in Appendix 1. The coding results are summarized in Appendix 2. This quantification work was completed by a content analysis. Qualitative content analysis is mainly inductive and appropriate for questioning the symbolic and latent dimensions of communications (Krippendorff, 2012 [1980], p. 22). Content analysis was very useful for identifying the presence in our sample of the six attributes of the *roman national* identified in Table II.

Results

Tales of glory: a chromolithographic version of the roman national

The story told by the chromolithographic trade cards we have collected corresponds to that of the *roman national* on several points. First, it is a Franco-centric history: 61% of the images in our sample deal with the history of France, 27% with other European countries (mainly Italy, 9%; Great Britain, 5%; and Germany, 5%) and 7% with the rest of the world. Chromolithographs illustrating the history of Greece and Italy almost always refer to antiquity.

The story we are told focuses on the ruling and warrior elite. 36% of the chromolithographs in the sample represent rulers and 21% warriors. Only 12% of the images represent the general population (peasants, merchants, craftsmen). Some companies, like the chocolate factory *La Compagnie française*, mainly published chromolithographic portraits of sovereigns (cf. plate 1).



Plate 1. Portrait of Charles VII by *La Compagnie française*
Author's personal collection

The history conveyed by the chromolithographs is a very personified one. 66% of the cards represent a clearly identifiable historical figure. The kings most celebrated by the *roman*

national are also those who are most often represented in our sample. Henri IV, Charlemagne, Clovis, Louis IX, Louis XIV, Francis I and Philip Augustus thus emerge as recurring characters in our sample. As the following text, inscribed on the back of a chromolithographic card indicates, the feats of these great men are celebrated:

The unity of the Carolingian Empire was to disappear with its founder: the Heristal family no longer produced great men, and the peoples subject to a factitious unity separated violently as soon as they were no longer held by the strong hand of the conqueror – “814, Charlemagne burial” by Aiguebelle Chocolate factory.

Monarchs are often depicted performing their most heroic deed. For example, Clovis is mostly represented in the heat of the battle of Tolbiac or smashing the skull of the soldier who destroyed the vase of Soisson. Images help to tell stories in a dramatic and theatrical form. When the character represented is not a warrior but for example a scientist, he is represented in a place that is emblematic of his knowledge, such as his laboratory or his office.

The theatricality of the image is sometimes reinforced by a famous quote, illustrating the grandeur and panache of the character portrayed: “If you lose sight of your standards , rally round my white plume” (Henri IV); “Soldiers, from the height of these pyramids, forty centuries look down on you” (Napoleon); "The state is me" (Louis XIV).

The *Guérin-Boutron* chocolate factory produced a series of chromolithographs conveying these, occasionally, apocryphal quotes. Through these words, the military, courage and patriotism are celebrated (cf. plate 2).



Plate 2. Three chromolithographs with quotes by *Guérin-Boutron* – 1. “Shoot first, English gentlemen”, The Count of Anterroches responding to Milord Hay, Battle of Fontenoy, May 11, 1745. 2. "To me, Auvergne! Here is the enemy!" Dedication of the Knight of Asses,

October 15, 1760. 3. "It's nothing, it's only grapeshot. Forward! "Captain Saint-Arnaud assaulting Constantine, October 13, 1837. *Author's personal collection*

The story told through the chromolithographs is very militaristic. Sovereigns are often represented in their military function and in the midst of battle. The great kings of France are celebrated for their conquests:

Charlemagne was the greatest man of the Middle Ages due to the wars he waged against his enemies, which included: the Lombards, the Saxons, the Bavarians, the Saracens - "Charlemagne visits the schools" by Aiguebelle Chocolate factory.

The two most represented historical figures in our sample are Joan of Arc (30 occurrences) and Napoleon (19 occurrences). They are celebrated for their combative attributes, their heroism and their superiority:

During the Battle of Waterloo, Wellington, nicknamed the Iron Duke, was proclaimed generalissimo of all the Allied troops against Napoleon. Despite his military merits, we cannot compare him, even from a distance, to Napoleon, whom he had nevertheless conquered – "L'Europe" by Chocolat Pupier.

Historical episodes ignored by the *roman national* like the devastation of the Palatinate or the Dreyfus affair, are also entirely absent from our sample. However, chromolithographic images are not completely aligned with the *roman national*. The narrative and moral dimensions are less pronounced. The school books of the Third Republic often contained critical or sarcastic descriptions of great historical figures. Very often, Louis XI was described as tyrannical, Catherine de Medici as perfidious and Louis XV as unworthy. The most republican textbooks sometimes criticized Louis XIV for his despotism and Napoleon Bonaparte for his coup de force (Amalvi, 1979).

These critical aspects are almost entirely absent from our sample. This can be explained by the fact that chromolithographs generally leave little room for texts. Of the ten brands in our sample, only two (Aiguebelle, Poulain) offer long and narrative descriptions. In contrast, most brands (e.g. Guérin, Besnier, La belle Jardinière, Suchard, Chocolaterie du Planteur) often printed advertising slogans rather than historical notices on the back of their cards (cf. plate 3). Brands who inserted a historical note (e.g. Pupier, Liebig) often did so by limiting themselves to a short and very factual description. These texts weren't long enough to create an atmosphere. A few qualifiers sometimes indicated a judgment, but in a way too evasive and brief to form a true moral narrative.

Frederick I, known as Barbarossa, was Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. On the death of his uncle Conrad III, he was elected King of Germany in Frankfurt in 1152. Then he was crowned King of Italy and Emperor by Pope Adrian IV - "L'Europe" by Chocolat Pupier.

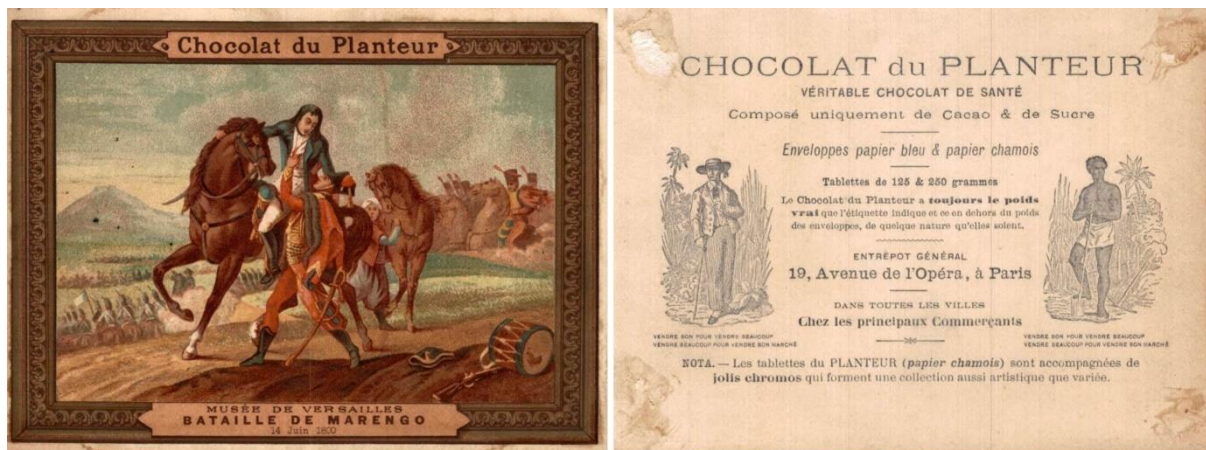


Plate 3. Battle of Marengo (front and back) by *Chocolat du Planteur* - Author's personal collection

In this first chapter, we analyzed our entire sample and found that the chromolithographic images produced at the beginning of the 20th century are consistent with the *roman national*. These images provide a very ethnocentric, patriotic and linear view of history. However, they do not form an actual narrative, because they lack a textual and descriptive dimension. The different companies in our sample are not, however, homogeneous in their approach to national history. Like textbooks, chromolithographic images are crossed by political fault lines, which we will study in the following sections using the cases of two companies: Aiguebelle and Liebig.

Aiguebelle and the catholic vision of the roman national

The Aiguebelle Abbey is a Trappist monastery situated in the communes of Montjoyer and Réauville in the Drôme, a Southeastern department. This abbey had several hundred monks in its ranks during the second half of the 19th century. Among the many craft activities practiced by the monks, the chocolate factory flourished. Too few to support the growth of their chocolate business, the monks hired workers. They then refocused on their monastery and moved their chocolate factory to the town of Donzère in 1895 (Bouton, 1978). The Aiguebelle chocolate factory released numerous chromolithographs at the start of the 20th century. These chromolithographs enabled them to promote both their products and a Catholic interpretation of history.

For example, they published a series of chromolithographs titled "Major Religious Dates" celebrating major events in Catholic history such as the baptism of Clovis, the founding of the Benedictine order and the founding of the Papal States. The Aiguebelle chocolate factory also dedicated a series of images to the "great pontiffs". Historical portraits at the back of these cards were systematically laudatory. A chromolithographic image of Pope Leo XIII, for example, reads as follows: "the prestige of his genius has earned him the audience of the world and universal admiration". Beyond this promotion of Catholic history, the Aiguebelle chocolate factory also broadcast a Catholic vision of the *roman national*.

Joan of Arc was celebrated by Aiguebelle not only as a national heroine but as a saint sent from God. "The virgin warrior" with her face "illuminated with mystical clarity" received visits from Saint Michael, Saint Margaret and Saint Catherine during her journey (cf. plate 4).

Saint Margaret and Saint Catherine alone did not abandon her. They appeared to her, advised her and comforted her with sweet words, telling her to respond boldly to her tormentors and fear only God - "Apparition of the Saints" by Aiguebelle Chocolate factory.



Plate 4. Two chromolithographs of Joan of Arc by Aiguebelle – 1. “Joan listening to voices”.
2. “The apparition of the Saints”. *Author's personal collection*

The Aiguebelle chocolate factory dedicated an entire series to Joan of Arc where her links with the Church and with God are systematically recalled. In one image, she can be seen taking communion at the Church of Saint Jacques de Compiègne. On another, she leads the people of Orleans in procession, surrounded by all the clergy. In yet another, she mourns the fallen soldiers on a battlefield, regretting that they died without being able to confess.

On several occasions, the Aiguebelle chocolate factory represented the heroes of the *roman national* in the company of angels and saints. In a chromolithograph depicting the Battle of Tolbiac, for example, Christ and Angels appear in the sky to give support to Clovis. France is represented as, "the eldest daughter of the Church" and divine providence ordines its history. In other images, Charlemagne is celebrated for having Christianized the Saxons ("Charlemagne destroyed the idols, sacred groves and fetishes of these barbarian races"). Philippe IV is criticized for his opposition to the Pope and his attack on the Order of the Knights of the Temple. He is described as a despot and spoiler prince who "had long coveted the riches of this mighty order".

Among the great historical figures that Aiguebelle places in the Catholic fold is Louis Pasteur. The scientist is celebrated as a great Christian who served the faith by refuting the theory of spontaneous generation.

In a memorable session, at the Salle de la Sorbonne, full of an audience made up of the elite of the Parisian population, Pasteur showed everyone the germs of the spontaneist microbe; and, the microbe of the spontaneists itself proved that life always comes from life. Thus was scientifically defeated a doctrine which faith already condemned and, solemnly affirmed, that all life comes from the very source of life, from God. – “Pasteur destroys the doctrine of spontaneous generation” by Aiguebelle Chocolate factory.

The history of France told by Aiguebelle is consistent with the *roman national*. It is ethnocentric, patriotic and linear. It incorporates most of the episodes and heroes seen elsewhere (Vercingetorix, Du Guesclin, Joan of Arc, Bayard). But these heroes are reinterpreted as the instruments of God's Providence and France is presented not simply as a nation, but as a divine creation. This Catholic interpretation of the *roman national* propagated by Aiguebelle was opposed to that of the secular republicans of the times. This opposition was also found in school textbooks, which formed a real "battlefield between church and state" (Amalvi, 1979, 22).

Liebig and the Universal History of Mankind

Liebig's Extract of Meat Company was founded in the 1860s by George Christian Giebert, a German engineer, who exploited the formula for producing beef extract developed in 1847 by Justus von Liebig, a German scientist (Brock, 1997). Liebig's products were manufactured in Uruguay and exported to various markets in the world. Trading cards were marketed to popularize the brand and circulated widely in France at the beginning of the 20th century. Liebig chromolithographs usually consisted of six cards, grouped around a particular theme (cf. plate 6). Each series circulated widely in Europe and was available in several languages, including German, French, Italian and Dutch. By disseminating identical images in many national markets, Liebig opted not for the promotion of a *roman national*, but for the dissemination of a universal history.

The topics covered by Liebig in its chromolithographs are very different from those addressed by the other companies in the sample. Only 24% of the images produced by Liebig in our sample are dedicated to the history of France, compared to 76% for Poulain and 94% for Guérin. Among the most represented national histories are Italy (15%), Germany (11%) and Belgium (6%). Liebig devoted entire series to the history of non-European countries such as China, India and Japan. The stories Liebig told in their chromolithographs were much less hawkish than those of competitors: only 8% of the Liebig images in our sample represent soldiers. Liebig devoted more images to artisans, peasants, traders and the daily life of the people (22% of the sample compared to 12% of the competitors).

In Liebig's chromolithographic series, we note a general celebration of civilizational, artistic and commercial achievements. For example, the brand dedicated a series to the city of Antwerp, celebrating the activity of its traders, "the city's economic boom in the 16th century" and "the considerable development of the arts and sciences". In this series of

chromolithographs, as in other images produced by Liebig, we notice less personified historical scenes. The images represent groups of men rather than portraying only a monarch or a hero (cf. plate 5).



Plate 5. Two chromolithographs of Antwerp's history by Liebig – 1. “Jean Appelmans submits the plans of the cathedral to the first magistrate”. 2. “The Hanseatic merchants go to the Stock Exchange in a solemn procession”. *Author's personal collection*

Liebig's chromolithographs make little mention of wars, territorial claims and enmities between the great powers. When Liebig deals with the great political figures of a national history, the descriptive text is a relatively sober, biographical note, without praise, simply indicating the different stages of the person's life:

Boniface. He was born in 1360 to a noble Ghibelline family. Barbiano and the generals of Galeazzo Visconti were his masters in the profession of arms. He received the lordship of Castanogla in Monferrato and that of Borgo San Martino. After Galeazzo's death he tried to create an independent principality and, for this purpose, seized Alexandria in 1404 and Piacenza two years later. He got into trouble with Marshal Boucicault, who ruled the state of Genoa on behalf of France. Taking advantage of the moment when his adversary was marching on Milan, he incited the Genoese to revolt (1409). This is the episode represented by our chromo. - “Famous Italian condottieri” by Liebig.

In the chromolithographs dedicated to Charlemagne, the sovereign is described as a semi-legendary character claimed by several national traditions:

Charlemagne, king of the Franks and emperor of the West, born January 2, 742 in Aachen or Ingelheim, died January 28, 814, grandson of Charles Martel, son of Pepin the Short, enlarged the kingdom of the Franks by incorporating into it little by little all of central Europe. He subdued the still independent Saxons and converted them to Christianity. (...) His memory has survived in a host of legends among all the peoples over which he had reigned (Germany, France, the Netherlands, Italy). - "Charlemagne" by Liebig.

In a series devoted to the different German *landers* (Saxe Wettin, Hesse Thuringue, Bavaria, Baden), Liebig mentions the successive territorial acquisitions of noble families, analyzes the toponymy and geography of the regions, traces genealogies and describes the architecture of the great castles. However, the integration of the *landers* into the German nation is not mentioned.

The fact that Liebig's chromolithographs do not exhibit an exacerbated nationalism is explained by the fact that the descriptive texts of the chromolithographic series are the same in all languages. It must therefore spare national sensitivities. Thus, the figure of Napoleon is evoked through the lens of art history. Liebig devoted a series not to the emperor and his conquests, but to his iconography, analyzing paintings by Vernet, David and Gérard. Sober in his descriptions of great national legends, Liebig indulges in more praise in his descriptions of artists. Thus, Beethoven is described as "the greatest and the most powerful musical genius of his time".

Much more than its competitors, Liebig devoted numerous chromolithographs to the history of craftsmanship and industry. Many series describe techniques and craftsmanship, materials and manufacturing processes. The series devoted to the history of writing, weaving or the steam engine help to distribute praise fairly, showing the achievements of different countries and eras. Hence, the series dedicated to the culinary art begins among the Scythians, continues in Athens and Rome, before arriving at the table of Catherine de Medici, Elizabeth of England and the Arch-Chancellor Cambacérès. (cf. plate 6).



Plate 6. "The History of Culinary Arts", Six chromolithographs by Liebig. Author's personal collection

Furthermore, Liebig's chromolithographs are devoid of any religious celebration or condemnation. When a religious building is presented, it is in relation to its architecture and the history of its construction. Liebig also manages to break away from the nationalism of his time by dealing more with ancient history (24% of the sample, against 13% for the competitors) and by borrowing a more erudite and encyclopedic style:

From the findings on the shores of Lake Constance in the Rose Island of Lake Starnberg and other places, it can be concluded that weaving was fairly widely known in the days of lake dwellings. - "The history of weaving" by Liebig.

With its universalist and humanist celebrations and its art of avoiding nationalist quarrels, Liebig is thus the opposite of its competitor Aiguebelle.

Discussion

Studying the 1,106 chromolithographs in our sample allowed us to answer our initial research questions. At the start of the 20th century in France, several food brands and department stores released a multitude of historical images largely consistent with the *roman national* as it was then displayed in school textbooks. These chromolithographs conveyed an ethnocentric, linear, heroic and patriotic representation of the history of France. However, the very shape of the chromolithographs prevented them from fully corresponding to the *roman national* as it was structured in textbooks. Textbooks made it possible to deploy a dense narrative, full of adventures and romantic descriptions. Chromolithographs, on the other hand, were often devoid of true textual narratives. They mostly spread stereotypical and iconic representations recognizable at first glance by the French people of the time. As Amalvi (2013, p. 232) explains, the history of France as it was told at the time “was staged in primary school, like a play of which we know all the actors and all the lines. Everyone was able to recognize leading historical and political figures and catch allusions”. We can thus consider the historical chromolithographs disseminated by brands as an additional device, almost a reminder, in the construction of the French *roman national*.

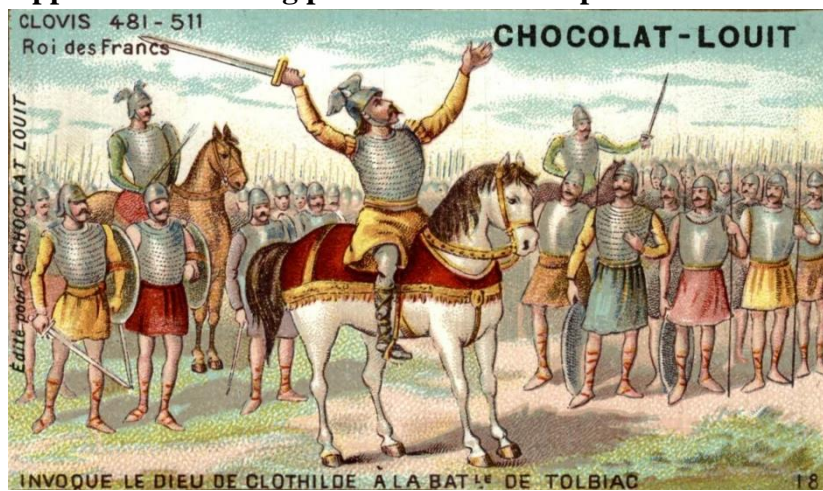
A first opposition runs through our sample: it is that between Catholicism and laity. Previous research (Amalvi, 1979; Bauvois-Cauchepin, 2002; Bourdon, 2017; Citron, 1987) has clearly shown how the *roman national* was crossed by this opposition. Despite many common and convergent representations, Catholic and secular school books differentiated themselves in many ways. They didn’t display quite the same set of historical figures. If, in secular and republican narration, the French nation was described as a construction of the people and their leaders, in Catholic narration it was above all the product of a divine will. We find this very strong lay/Catholic opposition in our sample. As we have seen, Aiguebelle's chromolithographs differ from the images conveyed by other brands in that they present France as a divine creation, and the great figures of its history as touched by providence.

A second opposition runs through our sample: the one between national brands, which perfectly match the *roman national*, and the international brand Liebig, which developed a more pacifist and Universalist vision of history. French brands like Louit, La belle jardinière and Guérin correspond entirely to the *roman national*: they are devoted almost entirely to national history and its heroes. Rather than disseminating chromolithographs specific to each national culture, Liebig chose to write a universal history and translate it into several languages. The brand spoke about the history of France, Italy, Germany, and spread its images across the continent at a time it was troubled by strong nationalist tensions. Liebig seems to have deployed strategies to spare national sensitivities, by avoiding nationalist and religious considerations, and by placing greater emphasis on the history of manners, techniques and the arts.

In this article, we have studied how brands have contributed to the building of a non-market imagination, that of the nation. The chromolithographs produced at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th constitute one of the first mass advertising tools. They have so

far been little studied. Research carried out on the subject to date has focused on American chromolithographs and commercial context (Black, 2017; Garvey, 1996; Kalba, 2011). This research broadens our perspectives on chromolithographs produced by brands. These have devoted part of their promotional material to building and maintaining another imaginary, that of the *roman national*. Further research would be necessary and useful to understand what other non-commercial representations brands have nurtured, throughout the 20th century, through the dissemination of their promotional materials.

Appendix 1 – Coding procedure: an example



Brand: Louit.

Country: France.

Time/Century: Middle Ages.

Type of person represented: Monarch, Head of State, ruler.

Name of the persons represented: Clovis.

Appendix 2 – Analysis of the chromolithographs: detailed breakdown

	Poulain	Liebig	Guérin	Aiguebelle	Louit	La belle jardinière	Pupier	Other brands*	Total
Total	247	352	130	96	72	69	59	81	1106
Country									
France	188	83	122	67	65	62	17	71	675
Italy	19	54	1	14	2	1	4	2	97
United Kingdom	12	27	2	3	1	5	5	2	57
Germany	2	39	0	0	0	1	4	4	50
Greece	7	18	1	1	0	0	1	0	28
Belgium	0	20	0	0	0	0	1	0	21
Egypt	1	17	1	1	0	0	0	0	20
Japan	0	11	0	1	0	0	0	0	12
Other European countries	7	19	0	3	2	0	16	2	49
Other non European countries	7	30	1	5	2	0	5	0	50
Unidentifiable	4	34	2	1	0	0	6	0	47
Time/Century									
Prehistory	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Ancient history	28	83	9	4	6	1	10	6	147
Middle Ages	35	68	15	44	21	25	6	18	232
15th century	22	21	6	10	7	9	3	11	89
16th century	31	37	20	5	12	1	3	12	121
17th century	31	33	14	6	6	5	9	13	117
18th century	41	21	34	6	11	21	6	11	151
19th century	54	49	29	14	8	5	17	7	183
20th century	3	2	2	7	0	0	1	0	15
Unidentifiable	2	37	1	0	1	2	4	3	50
Type of person represented **									
Monarch, Head of State, ruler	69	141	42	31	31	39	25	26	404
Military men, men at arms	51	29	38	31	33	16	13	26	237
General population	26	77	14	0	2	3	0	10	132
Scientist, doctor, inventor	30	28	0	7	1	3	1	6	76
Clergy, religious people	13	14	5	16	3	0	1	4	56
Philosopher, man of letters	24	13	0	3	1	4	5	2	52
Artist, painter, sculptor	17	16	0	1	0	2	3	2	41
Explorer, colonizer	14	2	1	5	0	1	3	1	27
Musician, composer	3	18	1	1	0	0	1	1	25
Other type of person	4	14	29	1	1	1	8	3	61

* A la boulangère, Besnier, Chocolat du Planteur, Compagnie française, Suchard.

**Multiple coding: potential double entries and overlaps.

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