

**Michael Embach, Claudine Moulin, Harald Wolter-von dem Knesebeck (Hg.), Die Handschriften der Hofschule Kaiser Karls des Großen. Individuelle Gestalt und europäisches Kulturerbe. Ergebnisse der Trierer Tagung vom 10.–12. Oktober 2018, Trier (Verlag für Geschichte und Kultur) 2019, 542 S., 143 farb. Abb., 2 Tab., 9 Taf., ISBN 978-3-945768-11-2, EUR 56,00.**

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The outcome of an international meeting in Trier in October 2018, the focus of this book is the remarkable corpus of books produced in association with the court of Charlemagne. A Psalter, eight Gospel books, a Gospel Lectionary and fragment of another lectionary have long been grouped together as »manuscripts of the Hofschule« due to their stylistic similarities, the personal connections with the court of at least two of the scribes in the group, and the way these books, and others that can be linked to them palaeographically, reflect the interests of the Frankish court between c. 780 and c. 814.

Produced over a period of approximately thirty years, the Hofschule group is complemented by the four equally magnificent Gospel books of the so-called Coronation Gospels group. The essays assembled here, written by specialists in history, art history, palaeography, liturgy, music and philology, reflect on aspects of the books' appearance and contents within the wider context of the notion of Europe's cultural heritage; they thus extend the discussion in useful ways.

In the first section of studies on individual books, William Diebold, for example, emphasizes the »peculiarly Carolingian concerns about the status of word and image« and draws attention to the »doubled inscriptions« in the evangelists' portraits in the Soissons Gospels (Paris BnF lat. 8850). In these images the text held by the symbols contains the opening words of the relevant Gospel, but the text inscribed by the evangelist himself contains a different part of the relevant Gospel, which serves to emphasize the message of each gospel.

Ilka Mestemacher neatly complements Diebold's focus on words with her concentration on the way in which what she terms the »feigned« material, such as the simulated marble in the depiction of columns, gemstones, gold, and draperies in the Soissons Gospels, generates meaning, beyond their role as ornamentation and their aesthetic purpose. Her study could be augmented by reference to the interpretation of columns by John Mitchell and Dale Kinney. Michael Embach offers a nicely-judged statement about the continued importance of the Ada Gospels into the early



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modern period, and the way the imagery of the binding added in the 15<sup>th</sup> century enhances the continued imperial resonance of this remarkable book.

Beate Fricke's and Theresa Holler's study of the botanical illustrations of plants as ornaments and symbols establishes fascinating links with botanical and herbal illustrations, especially of roses. This leads them to a new perspective on the notion of Christ as doctor which adds an extra resonance and depth to the symbolism of the roses depicted with each evangelist in the Godes(s)calc Gospel lectionary. Adrian Papahagi's contribution on the Lorsch Gospels, furthermore, makes a strong case for the »unitary theological conception« of the decorative programme of the manuscript as a whole, as well as offering comments on the scripts which would merit further consideration.

The second section of the book offers more general art-historical perspectives, with Fabrizio Crivello's appreciation of the creative reception of a legacy in relation to the canon tables. He argues that these portions of the *Hofschule* Gospels books provided an opportunity for innovation and the development of ideas and architectural motifs, though oddly without reference to Ilka Mestemacher's discussion, mentioned above, of the depiction of marble. Seiler contributes an important discussion of the aesthetic principles apparently underlying the ornamentation of the word of God in the *Hofschule* codices.

Christine Jakobi-Mirwald adds to the understanding of Theodulf's own aesthetic preferences mirrored in the apse mosaic in Germigny-des-Prés and the poem »Contra Judices« and its descriptions, but downplays their possible influence in relation to the historiated initials in the *Hofschule* codices. A refreshingly practical approach is provided by Christoph Winterer who asks how we may be able to account for the continuity of style across what appears to be a generation of book production. He proposes the possibility of tracing or templates playing a role, and whether the recurrent use of models might have had something to do with respect for order, harmony and authority.

Matthias Exner's demonstration of the similarities in the deployment of the range of essentially late antique scripts in both the *Hofschule* and Coronation Gospels groups, as well as his emphasis on the symbolic importance of the Carolingian emulation of late antique books written in gold on purple is enlightening. It needs to be read in conjunction with the chapter by Ganz who ignores Exner's remarks but usefully provides a list of Carolingian books subsequently written in gold, many of them also on purple-dyed or painted parchment. On script, Laura Pani's thoughtful discussion of the implications of Caroline minuscule scripts beyond the court opens up new perspectives. She remarks on the number of local varieties evident in the books of the first half of the ninth century, and what she refers to as the simultaneously »anarchic and dynamic« character of book production in the early Carolingian period. She is right to stress how many uncertainties remain in



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accounting for the emergence of Caroline minuscule and other evolved forms from half uncial and regional scripts in Francia and Italy apart from the work of the scribes associated with these court manuscripts.

Dietrich Lohrmann's short piece on the Lucretius codices highlights, with his very apposite comments on Angilbert of Saint-Riquier and the probable, but brief, enjoyment of a period of Epicureanism at the Carolingian court in the 790s, how much we still have to learn about the various scholars associated with the court. Patrizia Carmassi on Terence further enriches our understanding of the reception and transmission of classical authors at the Carolingian court. In a further exploration of texts that can be associated with the preoccupations of the royal court, Antonio Verardi rightly highlights the importance of the Frankish manuscript copies of the »Liber pontificalis« as evidence for use of the text, suggesting that they reflect both the possibility of papally-sponsored copies and manuscripts adapted for local use.

The group of chapters on liturgical matters is particularly stimulating. Jean-François Goudesenne, for example, pleads for a more comprehensive assessment of the emergence of a variety of types of chant in western Europe than one too exclusively focussed on the Frankish court. Iegor Reznikoff complements this plea with his discussion of the concept of *cantus romanus* and the problem of liturgical chant being associated with Pope Gregory and Rome. In addition to what is already known about the innovative array of texts included in the Dagulf Psalter from studies already published by others, Susan Rankin demonstrates how the book represents the singing of Psalms. In her words »through modes of display [the book] indicates specific techniques for articulating that specific [Gallican psalm text] version in singing«, even though there are no actual musical signs.

Arthur Westwell's refreshingly critical reassessment of the *Hadrianum* sacramentary challenges the assumption of a monarch directly involved in the process of liturgical change and explores how »authoritative liturgy« is to be defined. He highlights the *ordines* which »participate in and encourage the total identification of Roman liturgical practice, the topography of the city of Rome, and the history and apostolic authority of the papacy«. He suggests that the court manuscripts specifically encourage an identification of their liturgical contents with the history of the papacy and offers as evidence a fragment of a Gelasian Sacramentary of the Bibliothek des St. Nikolaus-Hospitals in Bernkastel-Kues MS 61, edited at the end of his chapter.

As one might expect, these codices have been the focus of many studies over the past few decades. The present volume suffers not only from insufficient engagement with some of the more recent of these on the part of some of the contributors, but also from the apparent lack of attention to what others in the volume were arguing, despite their having attended the same conference. There could have been more rigorous editorial



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attention paid to the English style of some of the contributions as well. Nevertheless, this handsome and sumptuously illustrated book usefully highlights the myriad of questions the Hofschule manuscripts continue to raise.

Mittelalter – Moyen Âge (500–1500)

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