

Art in the Age of Charlemagne

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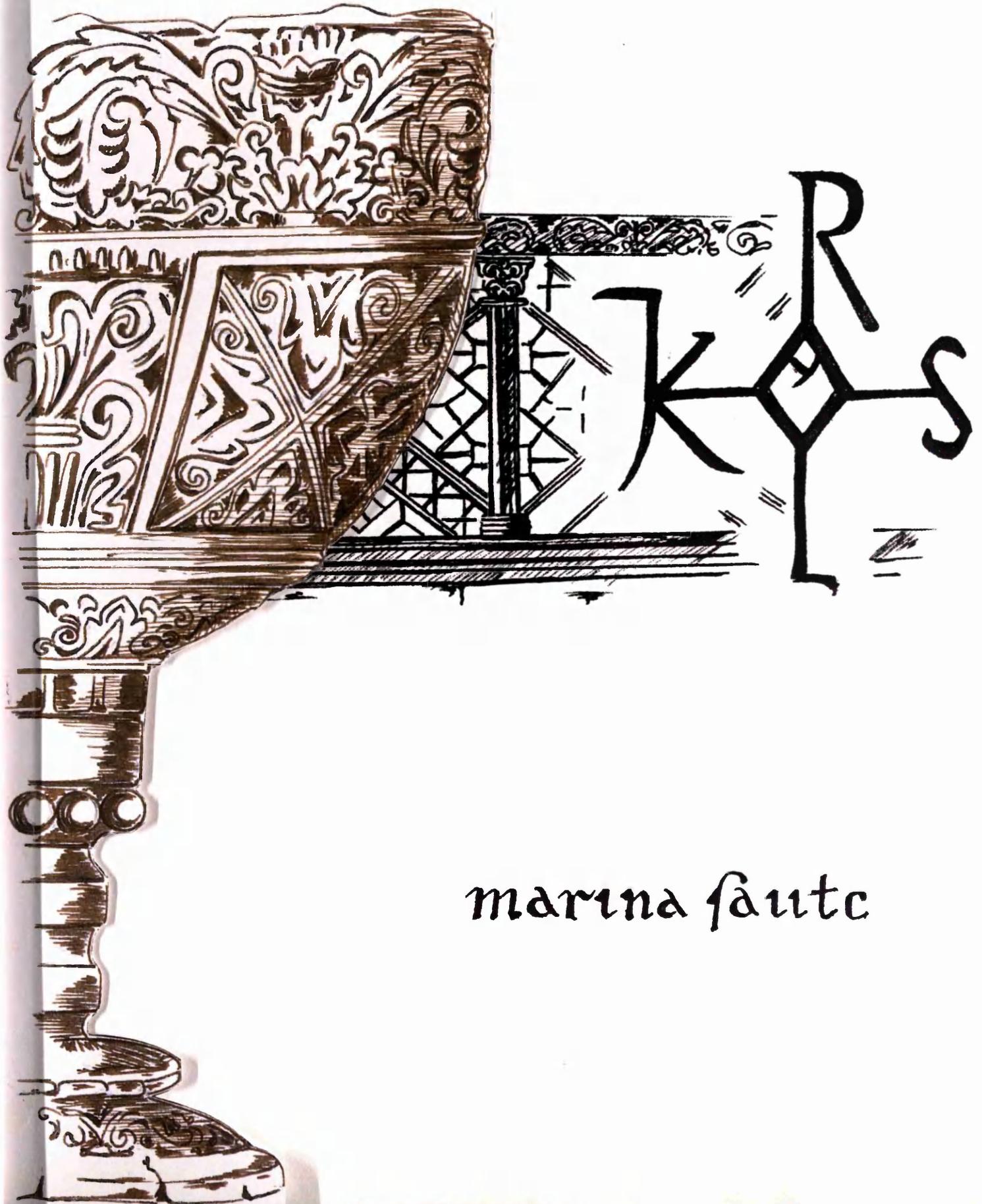
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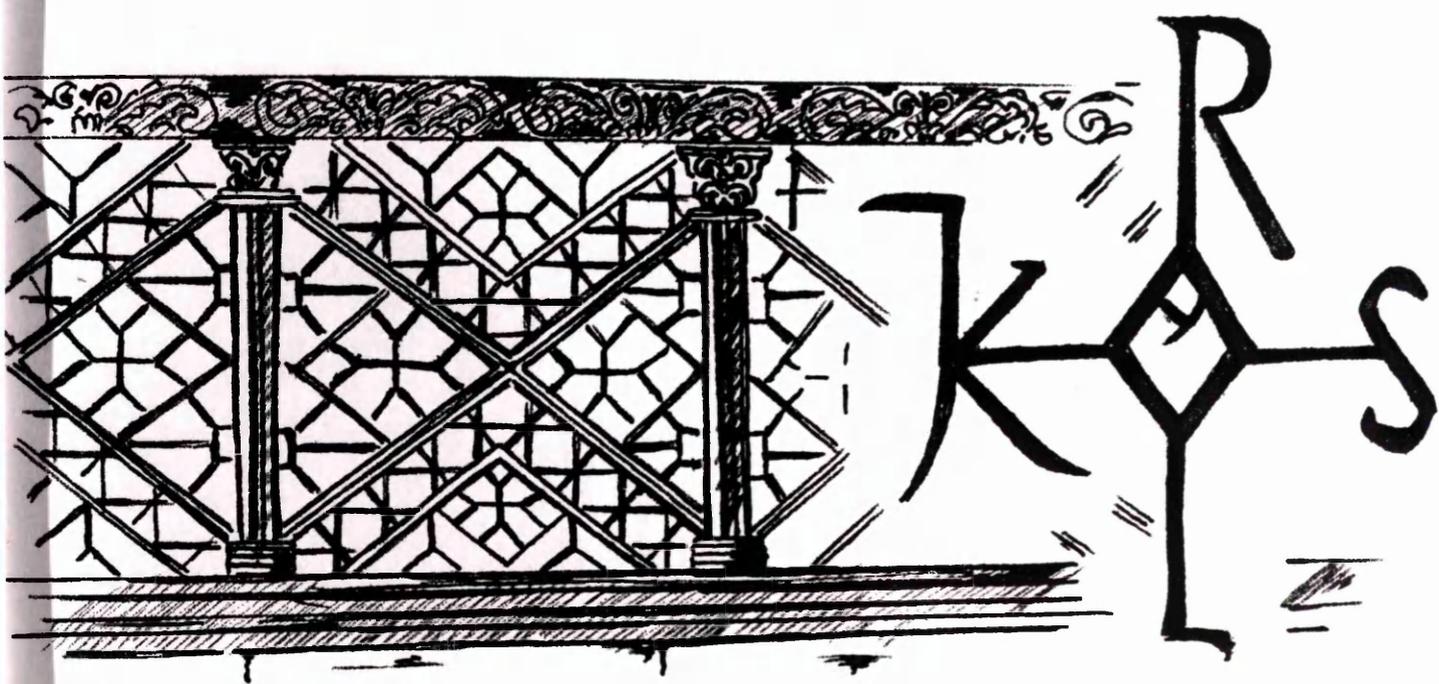
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Abstract

The art in the age of Charlemagne has been the subject of very many exhibitions, like 'Karl der Grosse' held in 1965 in Aachen and the more recent one in Paderborn 'Kunst und Kultur in der Karolingerzeit'. The purpose of this exhibition is however not to reiterate what others and their catalogues have already stated. It is to look at the art of the early Carolingians critically, in the light of how much or how little it actually owes to the antiquity and to what extent the *term 'Renovatio imperii romani'* can be applied to Carolingian art in connection with antiquity. The term '*Carolingian renovatio*' provokes the notion of a renaissance in art and architecture. Although when Charlemagne started his ambitious goal 'renovatio', he did not have manuscripts, metalwork, architecture in mind, but the revival of the Roman Empire under his leadership. On various occasions the word '*renovatio*' appears in contemporary letters and documents, but these do not hint at the status which art held during this time. The present exhibition will demonstrate how art perfected the overall concept. It will also show what Carolingian art borrowed from antiquity, how it appropriated classical art forms and, finally, how innovative and totally detached it is from classical art. (15027 words)

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Introduction Driving forces behind the Renovatio

There are many reasons why the Carolingians were so involved with Roman Antiquity and why they introduced their slogan '*Renovatio imperii romani*'. The idea of the Renovatio was not the outcome of a decision making organ at the Court of Charlemagne (742-28 January 814), but a concept which had developed out of various incidents, coincidences and factors. On various occasions the word 'renovatio' appears in contemporary letters and documents like the *Codex Carolinus* of 791¹, the *Admonitio Generalis* of 789 and in the *Epistola de litteris colendis* of ca. 795.² But the realisation of this intention to renovate would not have been possible without these beneficial factors. Some of the most important are discussed in the following.

The desire for roots and the need to establish an authority

There is the desire of every population to find their roots. By the 9th century written genealogies link the Carolingians by marriage to their Merovingian predecessors, to Romans and, via *Aeneas*, to the Trojans,³ roots which the Romans already traced ambitiously. Emperor Augustus (27BC-14AD), for instance, made sure that *Anaeas* – one character in Homer's *Illiad* - was included in the portrait gallery of famous Romans on his forum.

The Carolingians must have had a clear vision of the role that art could play in the work of political and cultural reconstruction: if art could give a physical form to things, which would otherwise only be grasped conceptually, it could be turned into a powerful instrument of education and the establishment of an authority, which in turn legitimised the Carolingian

¹ '*Denuo memorabilis membranis summo cum catamine renovare ac rescribere decrevit*', E.L. Dümmler, *Epistolae merovingici et karolini aevi I*, MGH, Berlin, 1892, p. 476.

² W. M. Stevens, *Karolingische Renovatio in Wissenschaft und Literatur*, Catalogue Paderborn III, Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit, Mainz, 1999, p. 662.

³ M. Innes and R. McKitterick, *Script and Book production*, edited by R. McKitterick, Carolingian culture, Cambridge, 1994, p. 211.

rulership. Not only newly created art, which incorporated antique features, but also spolia from Rome helped to reinforce the imperial right, which Charlemagne had not yet claimed at the beginning of his reign. The pine-cone, the doors of the Palace Chapel (see Chapter I), and the She-wolf (Ill. 5) – all three bronze objects can be seen in Aachen - bear a notion of Roman tradition. The equestrian statue of Theoderic from Ravenna⁴ and the mosaics in the Palace Chapel did not find their firm place at Aachen by coincidence, but with the fixed intention of establishing a strong link between the new Frankish Empire and the great Roman Empire.

Scholars at the Carolingian Court

In the mid eighth century two incidents became the main facilitators of the *Renovatio*. Firstly, the Carolingian expansion brought the Franks into contact with active cultural centres in Spain, the Lombard kingdoms and Rome. Secondly, while the monarchs reached out to the periphery of their realm, learned foreigners like Boniface arrived from Anglo-Saxon territories on the continent and from there influenced the Frankish court. His special mission was to preach Christianity to the pagans ... and to remain in contact with Rome.⁵ Others, like Visigothic and Irish masters, had Moslem and Viking raiders to thank for their decision to leave their homelands in search of refuge and patronage in Francia. Further names are Paulinus, a religious poet and teacher of grammar; Peter of Pisa, an important scholar from the Lombardic court who arrived at Charlemagne's court after 774; Fardulf, another Lombard, who became abbot at St. Denis in 792; Paul the Deacon, also came from the Lombardic court after 776; and last but not least Alcuin of York (735-804).⁶ In 781 Charlemagne met Alcuin of York for the second time at Parma and engaged him in his service. These developments concentrated the material and human resources for cultural revival in the hands of the

⁴ The equestrian statue from Ravenna was always generally believed to be the one of Theoderic, for whom Charlemagne had a lot of admiration. Lasko convincingly argues that it actually is a statue of the late 5th century Emperor Zeno, baptised Theoderic in Charlemagne's time. P. Lasko, *Ars Sacra*, New Haven and London, 1994, p. 13.

⁵ P. Riché, *The Carolingians*, Philadelphia, 1998, p. 41.

⁶ D. Bullough, *Carolingian Renewal*, Manchester & New York, 1991, p. 136.

Carolingians. Einhard (780-840) – Charlemagne's bibliographer - remarks that Alcuin was the most learned of all of them.⁷

The court of Charlemagne recruited and listened to an international constellation of Italian, Anglo-Saxon, Irish and Visigothic men of letters. Together they fashioned an ambitious programme for the shaping of a fundamentally Christian society. One element of that programme we call today the Carolingian Renaissance.

The right time for a new beginning

During this early stage in the development of Europe, more government was tantamount to better government and the reform initiated by Charlemagne had done much to promote social stability. Thanks to his farsighted encouragement of education and thanks also to the example he set in using educated men as clerks and organisers, there was a notable increase from his time onwards in the administrative effectiveness of central and local authority. By the middle of the 10th century, it is possible to trace all over Western Europe the beginnings at least of that administration machinery which is so necessary for the running of civilised life.⁸

An earlier attempt had been made to revive education. When Pepin III (714-768) asked Pope Paul I (757-767) for books, the Pope sent him a grammar by Aristotle, a second grammar, a treatise on orthography and a further book on geometry by Dionisius Ariopagius.⁹ But only years later Charlemagne, his court and his successors provided the essential ingredient to the revival of study that had been lacking formerly: the consistent support of public authority.

⁷ '...Alcoinum, item diaconem, de Britannia Saxonici generis hominem, virum undecumque doctissimum,...' Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, Stuttgart, 1996, Chapter 25.

⁸ R.R. Bolgar, *The classical heritage and its beneficiaries*, Cambridge, 1955, p. 131.

⁹ 'Direxiimus itaque excellentissime praecellentiae vestrae et libros, quantos reperire potuimus: id est antiphonale et responsale, insinual atrem grammaticam Aristotis, Dionisii Ariopagitis geometricam, orthografiam, grammaticam, omnes Graeco eloquio scriptas'. E.L. Dümmler, ed. 'Epistolae merovingici et karolini aevi I', *MGH*, Epist. Vol. III, *op.cit.*, p. 529.

Without support, earlier attempts to reform the script had failed to make much headway. The Carolingian dynasty and their clerical advisors were not intellectual innovators. They certainly would disown any such label. The significance of the Carolingian effort lay in another direction. Carolingian leaders promoted and Carolingian scholars executed the organisation and dissemination of what had, by their time, become an accepted body of knowledge and attitude towards learning.¹⁰

Weak Rome needed a strong partner

In 726, Emperor Leo III (717-41) launched Iconoclasm, which Pope Gregory II (715-731) refused to accept, as he felt supported by the rest of the Western world. However, Italy was continuously threatened by the Langobards, who were firmly established in Pavia, from where they took Byzantine domains. In 728, Gregory II obtained a promise from Charles Martel (714-741) to 'restore Peter and Paul'¹¹. But when in 738 the Langobards under their King Luitprand, finally moved on Rome and Pope Gregory III requested Charles Martel's help, it was not forthcoming. On the contrary, Charles sent his son Pepin to the Langobardian court, where he was adopted by Luitprand. Pope Hadrian (772-795), whose intention it was to maintain papal independence, carefully preserved a balance of power between Byzantine emperor, King of France and Pope. This balance was thrown off when his weak successor, Leo III (795-816), was expelled by a putsch and only returned to Rome in 799 under Charlemagne's protection. The strong alliance with the Frankish court was needed not only to protect Rome against the Lombards but also the Pope from the powerful Roman aristocrats. More eminent than that, however, was to build a balancing power to the Byzantine Empire.

With the coronation on Christmas Day 800, an empire was created which denied all

¹⁰ J. Contreni, *Carolingian Biblical Studies*, ed. by U-R. Blumenthal, *Carolingian Essays*, Washington, 1983, p. 72.

¹¹ P. Riché, *The Carolingians*, *op.cit.*, p. 48.

Byzantine claims to the West. The western emperors claimed to succeed the Roman as well as Christian emperors of antiquity. Through the establishment of this firm contact with Rome, Roman antiquity made its way northwards in the form of presents or spolia, where it influenced and inspired Carolingian artists.

I Early Carolingian art in context

Christian religion came into contact with antique culture in the 7th century, when under Dagobert († 639) and his son Clovis II († 657) two very different territories came under one rulership. The northern and eastern parts were inhabited by barbarians and the southern part by the old Roman families, who were accustomed to writing and Latin literature. The Merovingians had, therefore, already experienced the emulation of Christian faith and classical heritage. Sadly, today there is no evidence left as to how they dealt with this situation, if at all.

The Carolingians approached antique material in three different ways. Firstly, they used it as spolia, which was nothing particularly new, having been practised from early antiquity onwards. Also some Merovingian and even earlier buildings in Francia were built with the spolia. In some of these buildings, they functioned as mere raw material, especially when, at the end of the 5th century, the marble supply over the Pyrenees stopped and architects were forced to use material from nearby, mostly Roman, buildings.¹ The other reason for the use of spolia was to express legitimacy, or as Effenberger puts it, to express equality with the person who used the particular spolia before.² Secondly, they imitated or even remade antique art, because they could not find an original. And thirdly, they used antique features in their art, but gave it a different context.

The Carolingian used Roman concepts wherever it seemed convenient, but appropriated them for their own needs. They were conscious of classical history writings and followed their tradition. It was most respected as it allowed the use of rhetoric and invention, which was not

¹ W. Jacobsen, *Spolien in der karolingischen Architektur*, edited by J. Poehcke, *Antike Spolien in der Architektur des Mittelalters und der Renaissance*, München, 1996, p. 158.

² A. Effenberger, *Die Wiederverwendung römischer, spätantiker und byzantinischer Kunstwerke in der Karolinger Zeit*, Catalogue Paderborn, III *Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit*, Catalogue Paderborn, Mainz, 1999, p. 650.

possible through the Christian tradition. Einhard's bibliography of Charlemagne is in style very close to Suetonius' (c. 70-130 AD) accounts of the Roman emperors, but he adapts it by including documentary evidence in the narrative which leans on the similar Christian historiographical tradition.

Rome became an object of curiosity from whose heritage deliberate selection could be made. On his way back from Rome in 801, Charlemagne had the Proserpina sarcophagus, the bronze *She-wolf* (Ill. 5) and the statue of the Ostrogothic king Theoderic (492-526) in his baggage. Transferring historically important monuments to other places was already common during antiquity, especially under Constantine the Great (272-337). He transferred numerous sculptures from Rome to Constantinople in order to adorn his new capital with historic monuments. One of the most famous of these sculptures is the four bronze chariot horses, now in the Treasury of St. Mark in Venice. Also, the bronze *She-wolf*, which today is in the entrance to the palace chapel in Aachen was certainly closely connected with Rome's heraldic animal by the Carolingians (Fig. 1). (For discussions on the identification of the Aachen *She-wolf*, please refer to the catalogue.)



Fig. 1

The epitome of the way in which the Carolingian dealt with antique works of art is the *pinecone* (Aachen, entrance of Palace Chapel) (fig. 2). Once, the pine-cone, standing in front of

Old St. Peter's in Rome, now in the courtyard of the Vatican Museum, had been an indication of the greatness of Rome. In its reduced version, the pine-cone in the entrance of the Palace Chapel serves a new master or, rather, the pine-cone as a part of Old St Peter has a new significance. Was the intention to aggrandise the entrance of the Palace Chapel through its display, or merely to add more generalised signs of a higher status? Surely the basic shape of the pine-cone itself was not the key idea for the copying of this bronze sculpture, but its signification, namely its association with antiquity and the authority of St. Peter, would be the main reason for its display.

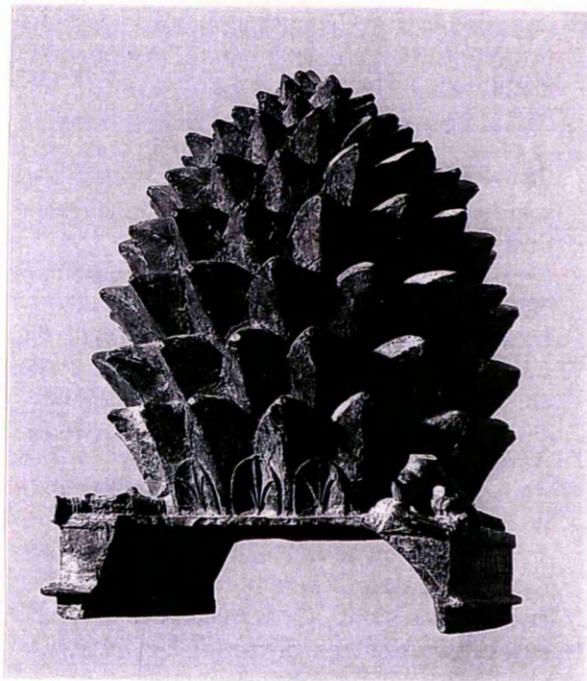


Fig. 2

But Carolingians did not only use 'old material' or spolia, they also created new works, which were supposed to replicate antique material. They were made because an antique original was not available. An obvious example is the bronze doors of Aachen's Palace Chapel (fig. 3). They were made for the entrances of the Palace Chapel and most of them are still in situ. These works were important for their iconography, as they fulfilled the same functions as the antique material. This tendency of adopting and adapting material of antiquity or the early Christian times is an important element of the art of this period. The atmosphere at the court

of Charlemagne favoured the interest in the artistic achievements of their Roman predecessors. With only a quick glance at Carolingian art, one could easily denounce the artist as a mere copyist who, lacking in skill, recycles old images. The representations might be the same and the artist surely took the external appearance of antiquity on board, but the idea behind it is very different. He appreciates its beauty, but gives its context a new meaning. Like Alcuin, he revives the classical scheme of the seven liberal arts,³ but only adopts those features of antiquity which could fit into a Christian scheme.

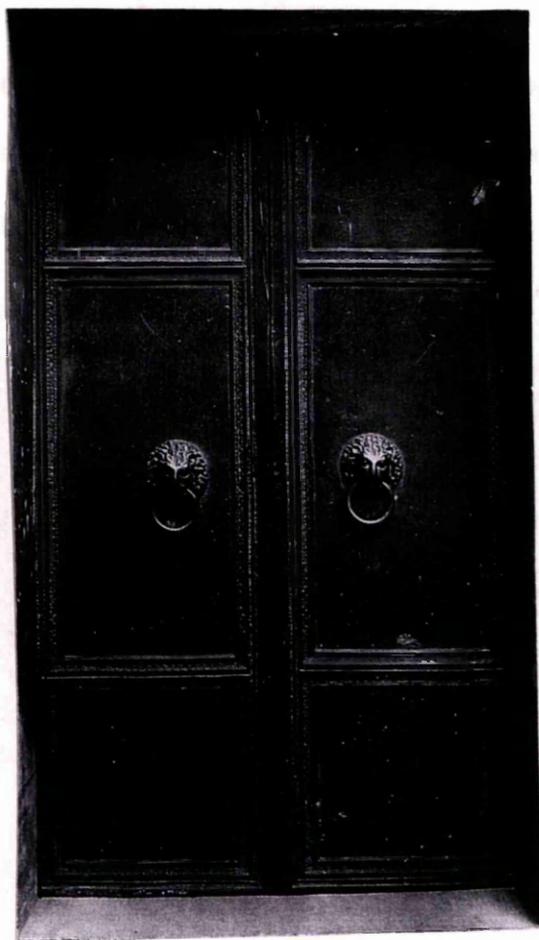


Fig. 3

The most common reason for the reuse of antique art was, however, its introduction into new functions and contexts. Through the use of these objects in a different context they attain a

³ Einhard, Vita Caroli Magni, Stuttgart, 1996, Chapter 25.

new intellectual value. The Carolingians valued these objects not only as historical sources, but also for the context which led to their creation in antiquity. Anton von Euw thinks that in Carolingian art, especially in manuscripts, Roman art found a new expression. He believes that the evangelist pages of the Court School successfully form a symbiosis between classical art and Carolingian thought.⁴ One particular example to illustrate this is visible on *canon table* page 16⁵ of the *Lorsch Gospels* (MS.R.II.I, Bukarest, Nationalbibliothek, Alba Julia). For the decoration of the arches of their canon tables the Carolingian illuminator often used antique looking cameos. Some of them bear representations and iconography similar to that found on these antique semiprecious stones. For this particular page the artist used five cameos, four with unidentifiable persons wearing Roman togas, the fifth, on the top, bearing the image of the three Maries at the tomb (Fig. 4). The artist used the antique pagan appearance, but gave it a new Christian meaning.

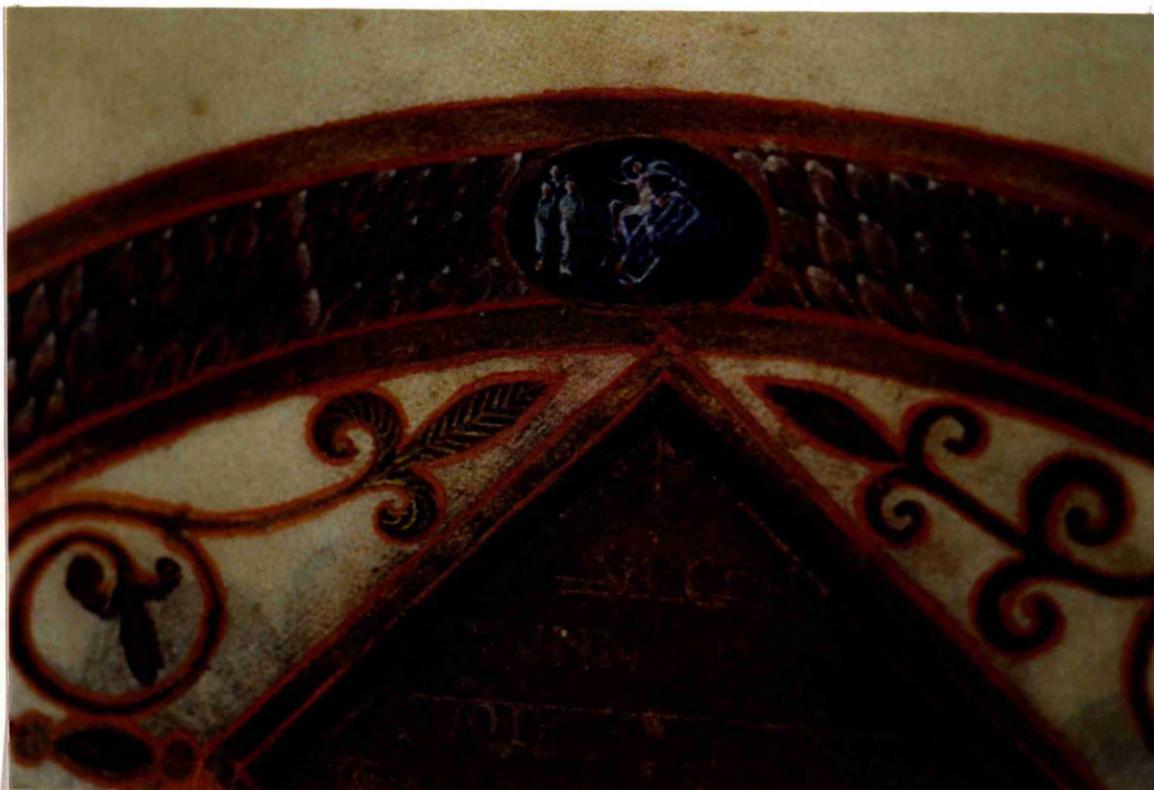


Fig. 4

⁴ A. von Euw, *Evangélistes Carolingiens illuminés*, La Haye, 1990, p. 44.

⁵ In order to avoid confusion, please note that in the first part of the Lorsch Gospels, kept in Bukarest, pages are referred to as 'page' or 'pag.', whereas in the second part, kept in Rome, pages are referred to as 'fol.'.

Carolingians were active assimilators, not passive ones. Old ideas were merely the starting point for new ones and even where they did not obviously innovate, the Carolingians transformed what they borrowed, giving new meaning to individual arguments and motives.⁶ Elements, styles and features may be the same, and the general notion may even be borrowed direct, but the concept and the accent changes. By studying Carolingian art one detects these subtle differences in tone, concept and idea, since it is here that the medieval artist reveals both his own individuality and the mental tenor of his age in comparison to antiquity. Lots of materials and representations are borrowed from antiquity, but the accent is on that of the 9th century and of northern Europe.

In the following, it will be examined how the *Renovatio* is presented in early Carolingian art, how the Carolingian artist approached antique material, how he used it and how he converted it into something fresh and independent (see Chapter III).

The combination of the northern spirit with the Roman Culture was the ideal situation for Charlemagne. On the basis of the art of the Antiquity he intended to stimulate his artists, who incorporated consciously antique features in their works. However, there is written evidence which warns about the use of antique features if they obviously contradict Christian ideals. Still, one must not forget that in late antique Rome, early Christian art was not necessarily different from pagan art, it had indeed been a matter of policy to hide their sacred symbols behind the commonplace of Roman decorative art. The fish symbolises Christ, the peacock - which flesh was thought never to decay - signified incorruption. Apostles were disguised as philosophers and Christ was represented as *Apollo* - the Roman God of Mosaic. These had all ambiguous but sacred meanings. Although these symbols were in those early days of Christianity used for secrecy, and not to conform with a Roman standard, but right from the start Christian art was always close in appearance to pagan or Roman art.

⁶ J. Marenbon, *Carolingian Thought*, edited by R. McKitterick, *Carolingian Culture*, Cambridge, 1994, p. 171.

II Antique Reminiscence in Carolingian Art

The previous chapter has established the awareness that all art is, in a sense, derivative and that the origins of a style are aesthetically the least important thing about it. It is now possible to undertake the analysis of a work of art and to distinguish what is an original element, what is the borrowed element and how the borrowed element was transformed by the genius of the artist.

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¹ F. F. Leitschuh, Der Bilderkreis der Karolingischen Malerei, Nürnberg, 1888, p. 32.

Architectural schemes

Columns are architectural features, which are strongly associated with Antiquity. A lot of Roman columns found their way to northern European buildings in the form of spolia and adorned churches like the cathedral in Quedlinburg or the Palace Chapel in Aachen. In the 790s, Pope Hadrian I (772-795) allowed Charlemagne to take marble columns from a palace in Ravenna, once inhabited by East Roman officials. Einhard tells us that those columns used in the Palace Chapel arrived from Rome and Ravenna. '*Ad cuius structuram cum columnas et marmora aliunde habere non posset. Roma atque Ravenna devehenda curavit*'.² It is not known from which buildings they were taken. These spolia formed part of Charlemagne's political programme with which he wanted to establish that he was directly related to Constantine the Great and other Roman Emperors. But they were not only important to emphasise the connection with the emperors, they also gave Aachen the right to be regarded as the legitimate second Lateran '*ecclesia et palatium quod nominavit lateranis*'.³

Architectural features are firmly established in the lay out of the Evangelist pages of the manuscripts produced at the Court School. Here they are mainly used to frame the author portraits such as in example of the *Ada Gospels* (MS. 22, late eight/early ninth century, Trier, Stadtbibliothek) (Fig. 5). The columns on either side of the Evangelists are painted on to imitate marble. Their capitals imitate acanthus leaves and are similar to those capitals in Roman buildings such as on the Arch of Trajan in Beneventa (Fig. 6). Together with the arch they form an architectural frame for the depicted scenes. These kinds of frames were earlier used in Roman wall painting (Fig. 7). The concept that the most important person is seated beneath an arch was familiar to the artist. It reflects the idea of a triumphant person walking through a triumphal arch. This impression is also created in the early basilicas, where the emperor is seen to be seated beneath the chancel arch (Fig. 8).

² Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, Stuttgart, 1996, chapter 26.

³ L. Falkenstein, *Der Lateran der Karolingischen Pfalz zu Aachen*, Köln, 1966, p. 45.



Fig. 5

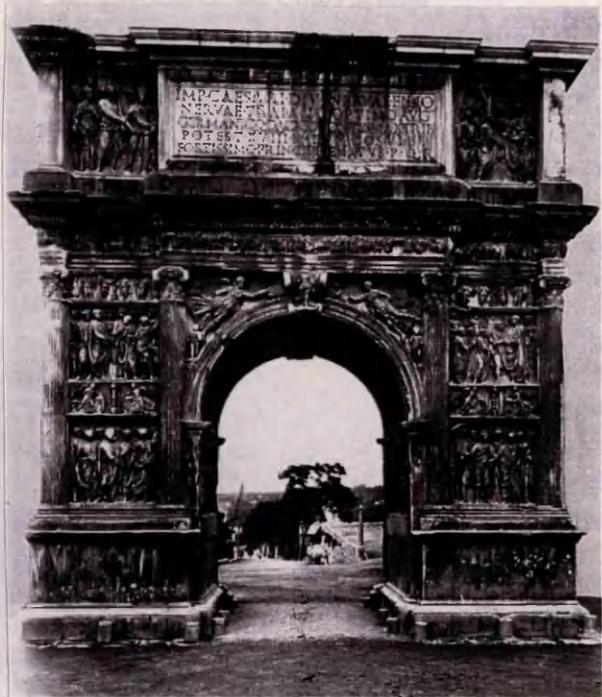


Fig. 6

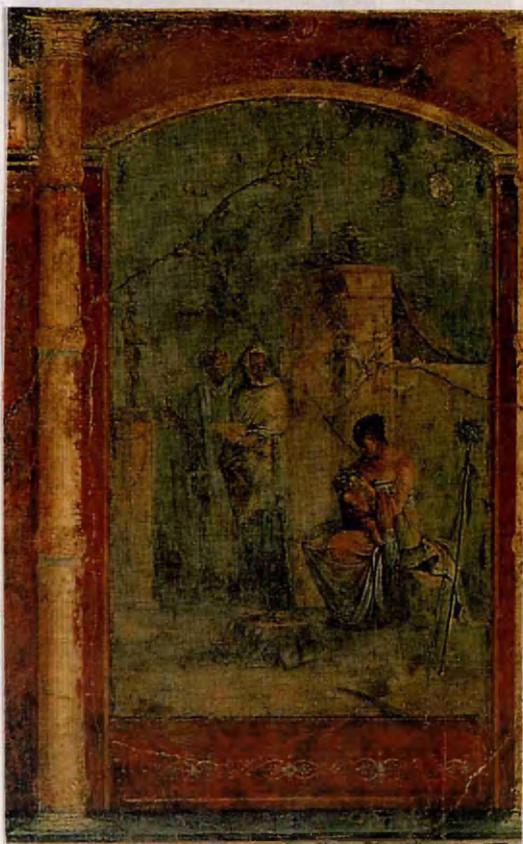


Fig. 7

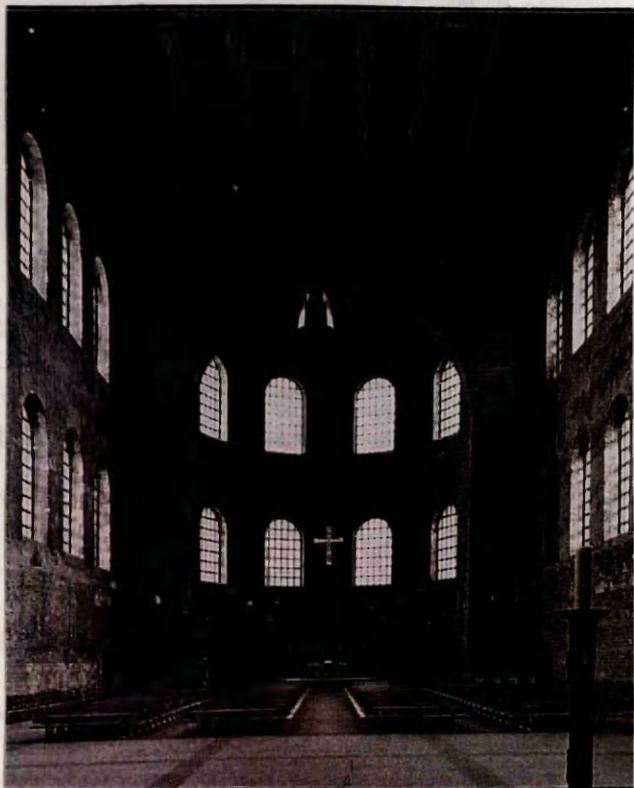


Fig. 8

One particular type of column which has been used in the manuscripts of the *Court school* certainly has its origin in Old Saint Peter's, where this type of column is said to have been used at the *lectern*. In the manuscripts it forms part of architectural frames of the Evangelist pages (Fig. 9) or acts as dividers of *canon tables* (Fig. 10).



Fig. 9



Fig. 10

All evangelists in the Lorsch Gospels, except St John, are seated on a stool which looks more like a building made out of stone than a chair (Fig. 9 and 34, Ill 12d). In some cases, the background depicts another building, which clearly bears features of Roman architecture, such as parts of the Trajan Market in Rome (Fig. 11) or the Aula Palatina in Trier (Fig. 12). Some of these buildings could even be identified as the rotunda of King Theoderic's tomb in Ravenna (Fig. 13) as shown on a Carolingian ivory now in the Bargello Museum (early ninth century, Florenz, Museo del Bargello MC 123.770/9) (Fig. 14) and the building in the historiated initial of fol.109r of the *Harley Gospels* (MS Harley 2788, c. 790 – 800, London,

British Library) (Fig. 32). Even Canon tables sometimes resemble antique buildings, such as temples (fig. 15).



Fig. 11

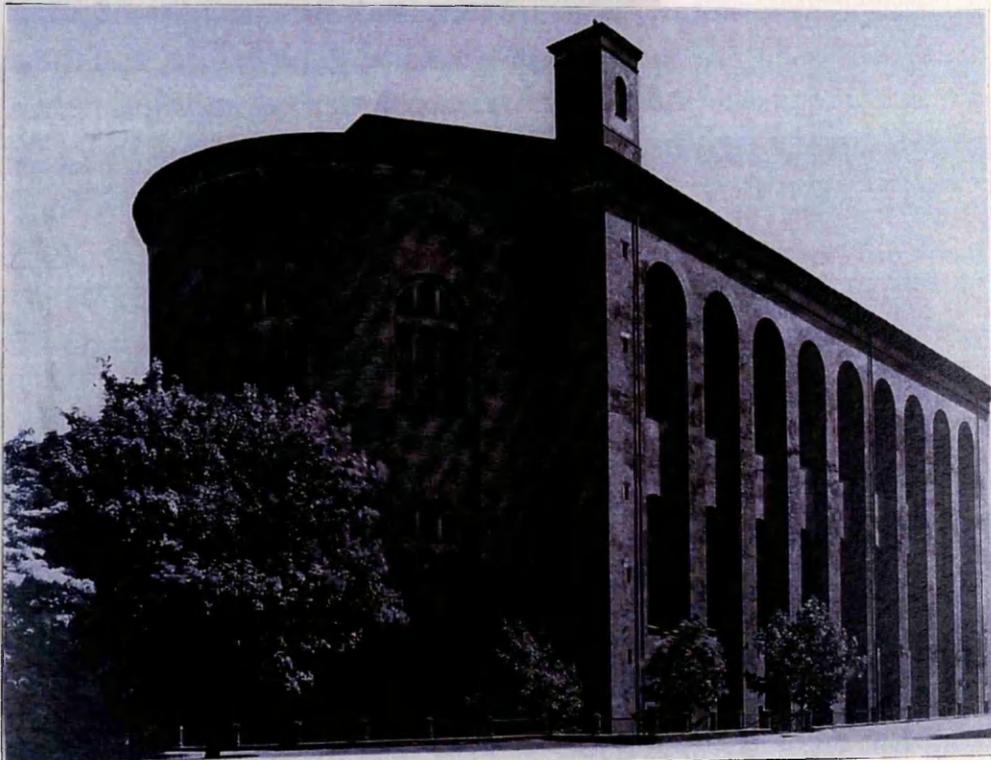


Fig. 12

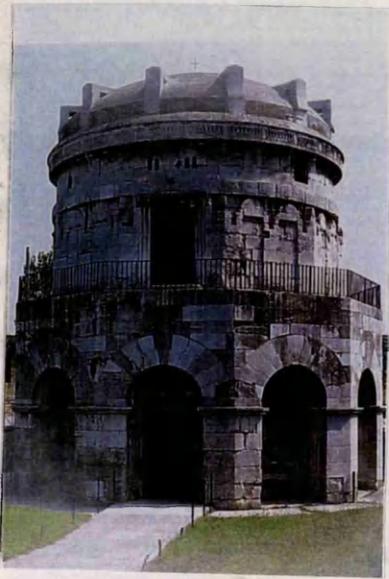


Fig. 13



Fig. 14

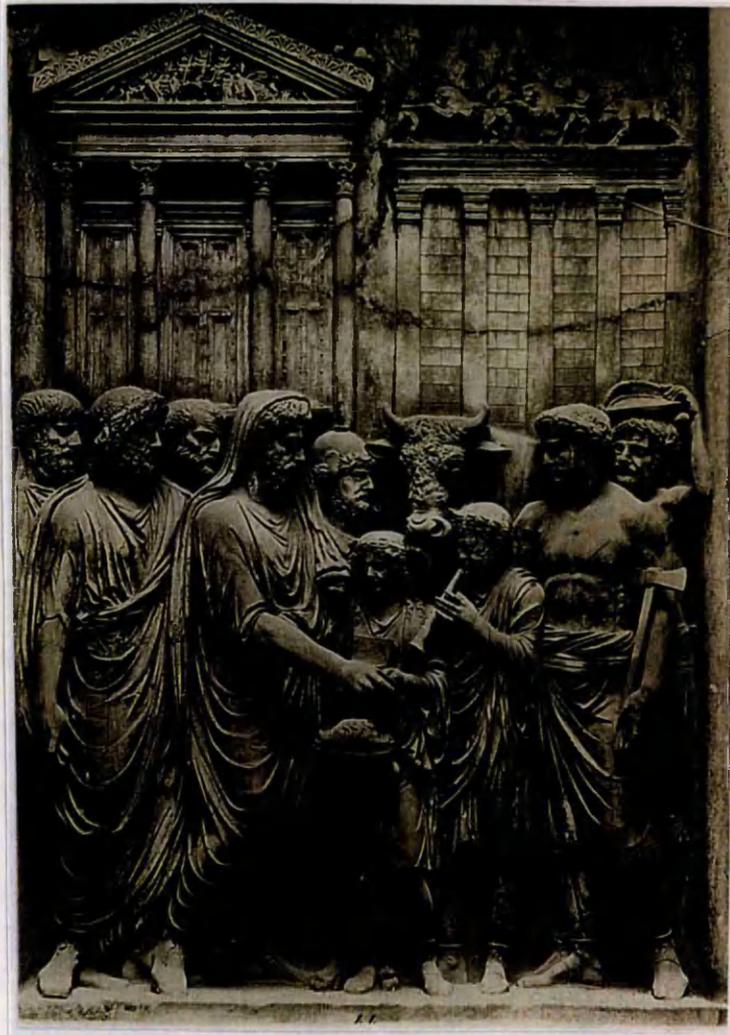


Fig. 15

In ivories columns are used as dividers of scenes (Ill. 6). They create a confined space by framing the depiction as in the book cover of the Lorsch Gospels (London, Victoria and Albert Museum, Inv. No. 138-1866 and Rome, Vatican Museum, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Museo Sacro, Pal. Lat. 50) (Ill. 11a and 11b). The deeply fluted columns of the back cover, with their acanthus capitals joined by an arch under which Christ is represented, cannot deny its antique origin. The type of column used for the front cover to frame the representation of the Virgin and Child is particularly elaborate. A very similar one can be found in S. Prassede, where this re-used antique column, probably originating from a fastigium, holds up the architrave of the entrance door (Fig. 16).

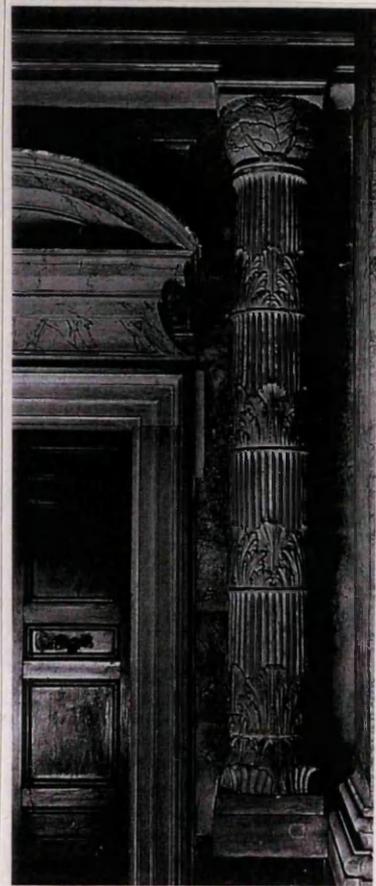


Fig. 16

However, antique architectural features are not only found in the minor arts, but in Carolingian buildings themselves. The most prominent one is mentioned in the beginning. The antique columns used in the Palace Chapel are merely decorative, as they do not fulfil any structural duties. Columns also form part of the articulated elevation of the gatehouse in Lorsch (Fig. 17).

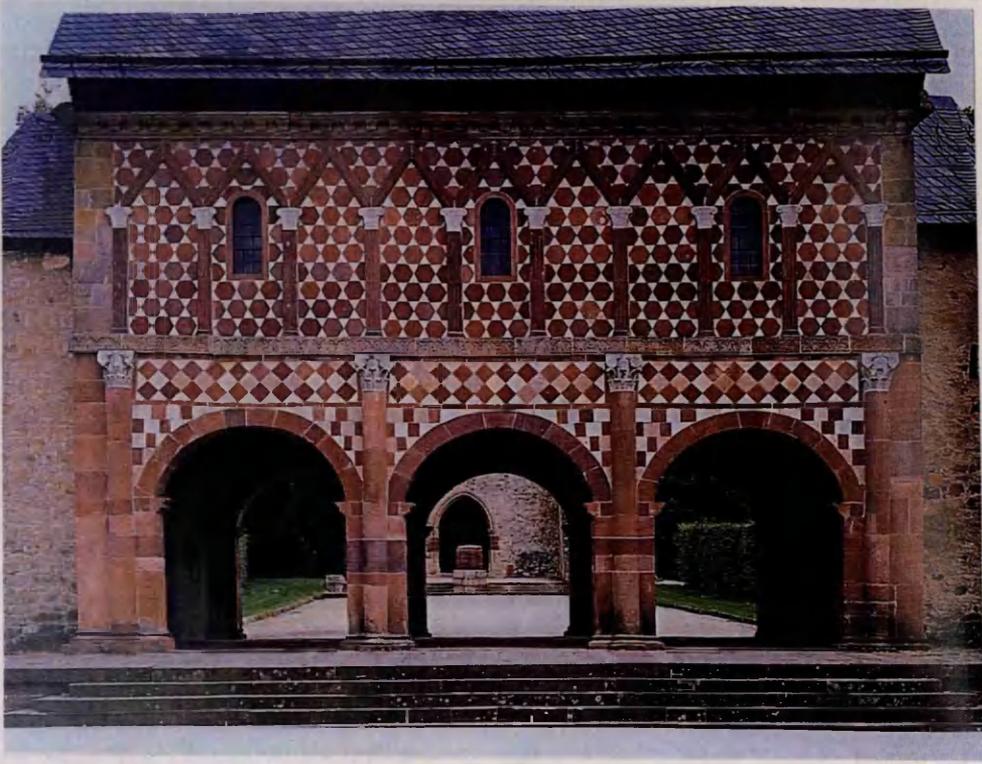


Fig. 17

Decoration

There are a number of different types of decoration used for the embellishment of the Carolingian art. Firstly, the highly decorated initials on the first pages of the manuscripts, which will be discussed in Chapter III. Secondly, the decoration mostly used in the framing of the manuscript pages. Various patterns can be found which seem to bear a close resemblance to antique patterns. There is, for example, the use of meander in page 37 of the Lorsch Gospels (Fig. 18) and fol. 25r of the *Dagulf-Psalter* (Cod. 1861, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek) (Fig. 19), which gives the frames a particular illusion of three dimensionality. This effect has already been used on the *Ara Pacis* (Emperor Augustus' Peace Altar, Rome) (Fig. 20) and in Roman floor mosaics (Fig. 21). The animals, birds in particular, surrounding the Fountain of Life in the *Godescalc Evangelistar* (lat. 1203, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale) (Fig. 40) can be found in various Roman wall paintings, especially those of the Villa Livia at Prima Porta, now in the Palazzo Massimo alle Terme in Rome.



Fig. 18

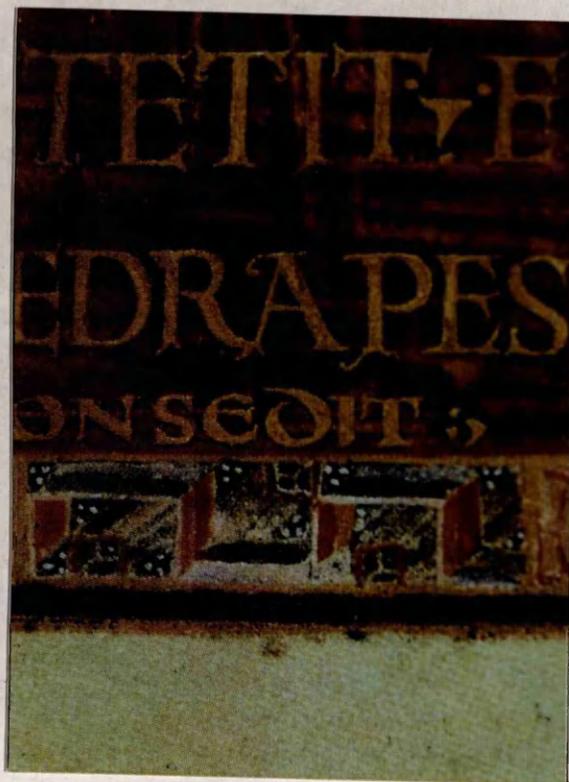


Fig. 19

Fig. 20



Fig. 21



The most recurring pattern is the scrollwork and floral decoration, which the Carolingian artist used over and over again, most prominently in the bronze railings of the Palace Chapel (Ill. 4) and on the *Chalice of St. Lebuinus* (Ill. 2). The most famous Roman products to use this type of decoration are on the Ara Pacis (Fig. 22). The illuminator of



Fig. 22

fol. 7v of the *Soisson Gospels* (lat. 8850, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale) placed a peacock on top of his scroll, very similar to the relief bird on Augustus' peace altar (Fig. 23).

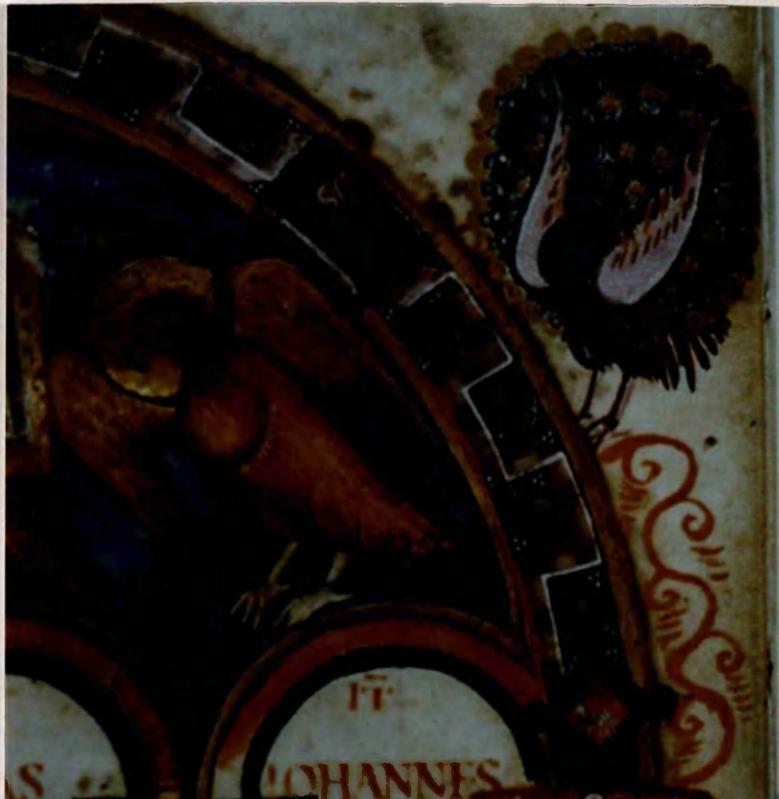


Fig. 23

Floral decoration like that used on fol. iv of the St Mark's page of the Godescalc-Evangelistar (Fig. 24) can be found all over Roman mosaics (Fig. 25, 26 and 27). For frames or dividers of scenes on ivories, the artists used stylised acanthus leaves or bead and reel, patterns which were also familiar in Roman antiquity.



Fig. 24



Fig. 25



Fig. 25



Fig. 26

There was a huge variety of patterns, forms, ideas and styles from which the Carolingian artist could choose. Although there is no evidence that the artist had any access to Roman works of art, one cannot ignore their similarity.

Another minor art which must have impressed the Carolingian illuminator is that of engraved gems. Due to a lack of textual evidence it is impossible to find out whether the art of cutting and engraving gems was practised during this time. The Carolingian craftsmen certainly knew how to engrave crystal. Many of these have survived, the most important being the *Susanna Crystal* in the British Museum (M&LA 55,12-1,5, 855-869). During Roman times Trier was a great manufacturing centre for precious and ornamental stonework.⁴ The Carolingian appreciation of distinguished antique works provides important evidence of cultural continuity. Gems in general were regarded as highly valuable objects and are listed separately in Charlemagne's testament.⁵ It does not come as a surprise, therefore, that the illuminators used these imitations as a decoration in the borders of the many Evangelist pages produced at the Court School (Fig. 9).

Author portraits

From Late Antiquity onwards, there is a continuous and developing tradition of the author portrait. The tall figure of Christ, lavishly dressed, seated on an elaborate stool with a foot stool and on a cushion, like in the example of fol. 3r of the Godescalc Evangelistar (Fig. 28), shows parallels with *consular diptychs*. He wears a long under-garment, with an over-garment not unlike the Roman toga draped over his left arm. His position, the staring eyes, the lavish clothes, the cushion and even the *tabula ansata*, as in the lunettes of the canon tables of

⁴ G. Kornblut, *Engraved Gems of the Carolingian Empire*, Pennsylvania, 1995, p. 4.

⁵ Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, *op. cit.*, Chapter 33.

the Lorsch Gospels, are similar to those in the Anastasius diptych (c. 517, Berlin, former Antikensammlung) (Fig. 29). The court artists must have been familiar with the concept of author portraits, as direct copies of classical literature were made and kept in Charlemagne's court library.⁶ A good example is the author portrait (fol. 2r) in the Carolingian copy of the antique manuscript of the *Plays of Terence* (Cod. Lat. 3868, Rome, Vatican Library). The original can be dated to the third century AD. In the page bearing the author portrait, Terence is flanked by two actors wearing masks (Fig. 30). Although this particular example is dated to the 830s, similar originals must have been available to the Court artist. Author portraits are firmly established in the Carolingian gospels. Together with their symbol the four Evangelists are represented at the beginning of each gospel, but in contrast to their austere and motionless predecessors they do not engage with the spectator. They are busy writing or in deep thought, sometimes gazing upwards as if in conversation with their symbol, but seldom taking notice of their environment.



Fig. 28

⁶ C. R. Dodwell, The Pictorial arts of the West 800-1200, New Haven and London, 1993, p. 47.



Fig. 29



Fig. 30

III Innovations and differences in early Carolingian art

Many scholars have expressed their opinions for the reason why the Early Carolingians based the external appearance of their art on Roman antiquity. Franz Leitschuh, for instance, thought that the motivation was that the Emperor's ideal was the amalgamation of the Germanic soul with the Roman culture. His intention was to motivate his artists to even higher achievements by laying down the high level art of the antiquity as a foundation on which they could build.¹ This thought expresses very clearly what has been discussed earlier. Carolingian art was meant to nourish from antiquity, but not meant to copy it thoughtlessly – an issue already expressed in the *Libri Carolini*.² The following will examine, the differences between the art of around 800 AD and antiquity and how it is totally different, independent, innovative and detached from it.

The role of art

Over the centuries from antiquity to early Christianity, right into the times of Charlemagne the role of art has changed. Roman art served the state, Carolingian art was meant to serve the Christian faith. This is a very broad generalisation and not necessarily true in all aspects, as not all art produced during the Carolingian times had a religious purpose. Still, a very large proportion of objects which survived into our times did serve religious functions and therefore justify this statement. A passage of a letter by Alcuin written to Charlemagne in 799 emphasises this change somewhat more: 'If many imitate your diligence and eagerness a new Athens might rise in the Frankish empire at Aachen that will surpass all the wisdom of the Academy by its service on behalf of Jesus Christ. The old Athens shone only through the teaching of Plato and the seven liberal arts, the new Athens, however, enriched by the fullness

¹ Leitschuh, *Der Bilderkreis der Karolingischen Malerie*, Nürnberg, 1888, p. 32

² A. Freeman, *Libri Carolini*, Hannover, 1998, III, Cap. 23.

of the Holy Spirit will surpass all the merits of worldly wisdom³ The eminence of the Christian element among the Roman model during the Carolingian Renovation is obvious. The special preference of builders and artists from this period shows the association with the Christian Emperor Constantine in their works.⁴

Unlike the Roman Emperor the Carolingian Emperor did not have religious power. Whereas as *pontifex maximus* the Roman Emperors were leaders of religious life and the State, the Emperors of the new Roman Empire had to share this power with the Pope. This had a huge impact on art. The western Emperor did not guide religious rites, but was merely a passive spectator and follower. Scenes such as those depicted on the Ara Pacis would not have been a subject of the Carolingian picture programme. Of course, these circumstances would shortly lead to open struggles for power between the Pope and the Western Emperors during the centuries following Charlemagne's death.

A further difference is to be seen in the handling and appreciation of art objects in general and the depiction of God in particular. The Christian religion forbids idolatry, something which was everyday practice in paganism. In 726 the Byzantine Emperor Leo III (717-741) forbade the creation of images of God and ordered the destruction of the existing images throughout his realm. As the *Libri Carolini* testifies, the Carolingians took a position in the middle. They denounced the veneration of religious images, but at the same time put religious works of art under their protection,⁵ thereby sharing Gregory the Great's (589-603) view, which he expressed in his letter to Bishop Serenus of Marseille. He advised ceasing the veneration of religious images, but forbade the destruction of them.⁶

³ U-R. Blumenthal, *Carolingian Essays*, Washington, 1983, p. viii.

⁴ R. Krautheimer, *Studies in Early Christian, Medieval and Renaissance Art*, New York, 1969, p. 234.

⁵ *Permittimus imagines sactorum quicunque eas formare voluerint, tam in ecclesiae quam extra ecclesiam, propter amorem Dei et sanctorum eius adorare vero eas nequa quaquam cognimus, qui voluerint frangere vel destruere eas etiam si quis voluerit non permittimus.* A. Freeman, *Libri Carolini*, *op. cit.*, Chapter 19.

⁶ E.L. Dümmler, ed. *Epistolae merovingici et Karolini aevi: Gregorius Magnus, Epp. 2: Registrum Epistularum*, XI, 10 *MGH*, Berlin, 1892. p. 269ff.

Finally, one must not forget one of the major roles of art during this time. Again, Gregory the Great can be used as reference here, as his position was that art had to act as the Bible for the poor who cannot read.⁷ Whether Gregory used this as an excuse to justify his expenses for art is not entirely certain. Nevertheless, the importance of such a statement becomes particularly obvious when comparing the society of the Carolingians with the Romans. In the former, literacy did not go beyond a couple of thousand men and a few learning centres, whereas in the latter, literacy was widely spread among the majority of citizens of the Roman empire.

Representation of the human body

Christian Beutler thought that the reason behind embracement of antiquity was that the Carolingians had the intention of taking their art to a relatively high level in a very short time. In order to achieve this, it appeared logical to borrow forms and patterns from Antiquity.⁸ Nevertheless, the artist succeeded in creating something which is entirely Carolingian in appearance. A very good example is the representation of the human body. In Roman relief or free standing sculpture, the limbs and curves of the body are always visible through the drapery and dictate the way the folds fall. The Carolingian artist, however, was not interested in depicting the human body. Looking at the Christ in Majesty pag. 36 of the Lorsch Gospels (Ill. 12b) the artist is clearly more interested in displaying hem lines and rich fold structures of the drapery than in the body underneath, as he assumed his audience were able work this out for themselves. His intention was to represent, rather than to impress the audience with his skills.

⁷ J.J.G. Alexander, 'Iconography and Ideology: uncovering social meanings in western medieval art', *Studies in Iconography*, 1993, vol. 15, p. 102.

⁸ C. Beutler, *Bildwerke zwischen Antike und Mittelalter*, Düsseldorf, 1964, p. 53.

Anglo-Saxon influences

One of the earliest evidence of Christianity in Britain is on a 4th century lead tablet, now in the pump room at Bath. Christianity had spread among the Celts in Roman Britain. One hundred years later the Germanic wave was driving up over all the borders of the Roman Empire and Celtic Christianity was separated from the rest. Italy, Spain, and Gaul were obedient to the Roman See. While here Christianity struggled for life, Ireland remained untouched by invaders. In their art they developed individual character, which we identify today as interlacing, knotwork, spirals and trumpet patterns (fig. 31).



Fig. 31

All these features were not only used in Anglo-Saxon art, but appear in the early Carolingian manuscripts and metalwork. How? One must not forget that it was indeed Anglo-Saxon

missionaries who brought Christianity to the continent and with them they brought their art. They founded monasteries in Fulda and Esternach. In 781 Charlemagne met Alcuin of York for the second time at Parma and engaged him in his service. This recruiting of such a highly skilled scholar was certainly the path by which the Anglo-Saxon features became included in Carolingian art. Charles' scribes and illuminators must have been familiar with the manuscripts which these Anglo-Saxon missionaries brought with them, so it is not surprising that the geometric interlace and patterning found its way into manuscripts produced in the Court School (Fig. 32).



Fig. 32

Writing

The Carolingian reform of handwriting lasted well into the centuries after the Carolingians, Ottonians and even later. The *Carolingian minuscule* triumphed over all national handwritings, which had developed out of the Roman scripts, such as *uncial*. This new way of

writing has remained unchanged right up to the present day with the exception of the addition of capitals. The Carolingian minuscule first emerged out of the numerous local handwritings in the 780s. Its perfected appearance can be seen in the 830s copy of the plays of Terence.⁹

Having said this, one would expect that from then onwards all manuscripts produced in the Court School would have been written in the new form. It is therefore most surprising to learn that the Gospels are not entirely written in the Carolingian minuscule, but in a style which cannot deny its Roman origin (Fig. 33). The Roman capital is still used for headings, titles and opening pages, *uncial* continuing to be used in documents, letters and in a new system referred to as *littera notabilior*. This means that quotes are marked in the margins with uncials. This was done to indicate the author of the original thought and to avoid plagiarism.¹⁰ However, the use of this old script was



Fig. 33

reduced considerably and Carolingian minuscule was widely accepted as a unified form of writing, as surviving manuscripts demonstrate.

Presentation of space

The presentation of space by the Carolingian artist is not always acknowledged by scholars.

⁹ A. Schmid, *Schriftreform – Die Karolingische Minuskel*, *Paderborn Catalogue III*. Mainz, 1999., p. 688.

¹⁰ W.M. Stevens, *Karolingische Renovatio in Wissenschaft und Literatur*, *Catalogue Paderborn III. op. cit.*, p. 667

Compared with the superior technical accomplishment of the antique perspective scene, the medieval artist is degraded to a two-dimensional work.¹¹ This statement might well be true for ivories. Here it is often not clear if it was intentional. Whether it was not important to the overall appearance is a different matter. However, illuminators are very interested in creating space in the form of *areol* perspective (Fig. 34). With subtle differences of red, the artist indicates the hilly receding background behind St. Matthew.



Fig. 34

Another example is on fol. 8iv in the Soisson Gospels (Fig. 35). The spandrel figures of the Archangel Michael and a saint, as well as the lion in the lunette, are set in front of a background where *areol* perspective is indicated. It is interesting that the different shades of pink behind the Archangel are clearly distinguishable. The shading behind the saint is done much more elegantly as the colours merge into each other. *Areol* perspective also is not a Carolingian invention. It already occurs in the *Vatican Vergil* (cod. lat. 3225, Rome, Vatican Library) in the early 5th century, but it had disappeared since (Fig. 36). Whether the Carolingian illuminator was familiar with this concept and revived it, or whether he reinvented it, is uncertain. Surviving Roman wall paintings show that this was not a standard feature used in Roman antiquity.

¹¹ R. Hinks, *Carolingian Art*, London, 1935, p. 168.



Fig. 35



Fig. 36

Narrative scene and page layout

One particular feature which did not emerge from Roman art was narrative. 'There is no narrative in Roman art.'¹² It would be wrong to say that it was a newly discovered form, as this would deny the gradual development of it throughout the centuries before the Carolingians. However, narrative scenes seemed to be established confidently in their wall paintings, manuscripts and ivories. It is suggested that the depiction of narrative scenes is one outcome of the humanistic programme, which emerged from Aachen, so that the unlettered can follow the Bible.¹³ Sequential scenes cover ivories in particular (Fig. 37). Here the scenes are still individually framed and set into their own space.



Fig. 37

In manuscripts of the Carolingian period after Charlemagne's death, such as the *Granval Bible* (MS 10546, London, British Library) and the *Vivian Bible* (Lat. 1, Paris Bibliothèque Nationale), the artist was very confident in depicting sequential scenes which are not separated from each other.

Another form of narrative can be illustrated with the help of fol. 109r of the Harley Gospels (Fig. 38). On the opening page to the second Gospel the first letter 'Q' is historiated. The scene depicts the annunciation to Zacharias in front of the Temple: 'But the Angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son,

¹² Dr. Michael Michael, lecture on *Renaissance and Anti-Renaissance*, 24 June 2000.

¹³ R. Hinks, *Carolingian art*, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

and thou shalt call his name John.’¹⁴ Although not directly related to the scene, Maria is present as a witness of the described scene together with Elisabeth. They are placed in two separate medallions on the outside of the ‘Q’. It would be incorrect to speak about the depiction of a typological scene, which demands the depiction of an Old Testament scene foreshadowing a New Testament one. However, by depicting two sequential scenes the artist creates a narrative. Through the representation of these two scenes he also hints at future events, such as the Annunciation to the Virgin and the Visitation.



Fig. 38

¹⁴ Bible, St. Luke, Chapter 1, 13.

In terms of page layout fol. 124r of the Soisson Gospels represents a very interesting scenario. The illuminator manages to make good use of the available space. The area inside the arch is filled with initials and writing. The initial 'Q' and the 'o' of *quoniam* are historiated (Fig. 39).



Fig. 39

Obviously, the illuminator wanted both depicted scenes to be framed. As the 'u' of *quoniam* would not naturally frame the scene entirely, he used the third letter of the first word. The

spandrels are also filled with figures. Three scenes are on one page: Christ blessing flanked by two saints, the Annunciation and the Visitation. The artist is not afraid of separating the two people involved in the annunciation scene. He expects his audience to know that they belong together. In fact, both of them act as if the arch was not be in their way and there was not an enormous distance between them. This scene is the most likely to be able to take this distance out of the three scenes on this page. The artist would certainly not have chosen the Visitation for the spandrels, as physical contact between the Virgin Mary and Elisabeth is part of the iconography.

It is true that now the artist begin to feel confident enough to re-enact the Bible stories in his own mind, to give them his own interpretation, to make it narrative and give a visual form to spiritual and emotional themes.

Symbolism

‘Just as the change in the art of our own time is due to a change of spiritual needs, and not to a decline of skill or mental degeneration, so the change from antique to medieval art was due to a change in the imaginative attitude to the tangible and visible world.’¹⁵ The Carolingian artist is not concerned with realistic representations of space, flora and fauna, buildings etc. His representations are symbolic. Whereas a Roman citizen demanded a ‘realist’ representation of Venus, the Carolingian spectator of St. Mark did not expect the Evangelist to have looked like that. He identified him by his symbol, not by the distinguished appearance. Whereas the Roman artist started with a visual impression and worked perceptually, the Carolingian artist worked conceptually.¹⁶ The former is interested in imitation. His primary concern is the correct presentation of the individual elements. Naturalistic representation of flowers and animals, space or human beings are not the ambition of the Carolingian artist. Making an

¹⁵ R. Hinks, Carolingian art, op. cit., p. 211.

¹⁶ Idem, Carolingian Art, p. 21

abstract idea accessible to the sense is not his intention, but rather to challenge his spectator intellectually. He does not entertain with his work. Art as a form of decoration and embellishment is an alien concept to him.

The representation of symbols has a longstanding tradition in Christian Art. Before Christianity was declared state religion by Constantine the Great in 313, it was custom to use sacred symbols in order to avoid the attention of the Roman authority and consequently prosecution. Images of fish, peacock and philosophers had all ambiguous meanings. Although for different reason, but this tradition was expressed in Carolingian art. The artist discovered that art enabled him to express a double meaning, one which is literal and another which is more conventional. One example, which illustrates this, is the fountain of life depicted twice in manuscripts of the Court School, one in the Godescalc Evangilistar and the other in the Soissons Gospels. Originally, it stood for the fountain of eternal life. However, in the Godescalc Evangilistar (fol. 3v) it has a further signification (Fig. 40). Together with its inscription and its juxtaposition to the Christmas pericope of Mattheaus (I, 18-22) it stands for the birth of Christ as the fountain of Life. The animals surrounding the fountain symbolise paradise. Made for the baptism of Charlemagne's son Pepin, this fountain of life further symbolised a specific event and time.



Fig. 40

Conclusion

Looking back to the glorious past and basing new structures or concepts on old standards is not particularly characteristic to the Carolingians. It has been done many times before and after Charlemagne. The admiration for Alexander the Great by Emperor Augustus (27BC-14AD) is recorded by Suetonius in *De Vita Caesarum*: 'About this time he (Augustus) had the sarcophagus containing Alexander the Great's mummy removed from its shrine and, after a long look at its features, showed his veneration by crowning the head with a golden diadem and strewing flowers on the trunk.'¹ In search of his roots Otto III (980 – 1002) opened Charlemagne's tomb in 1000, on the occasion of which the Coronation Gospels (Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum, SCHK, XIII.18) was said to be found. In modern times the first Americans in their westward expansion tried to establish their links with the old Continent by founding towns like Sparta, Carthages, Saracus and used names like Seneca and Euclid. And finally, not only the fact that Charlemagne's realm covered more or less exactly the territory of the founder countries of the European Union, but also that he managed to reign over so many different peoples spread over such a vast area, was reason enough for the German Chancellor Kohl and the French President Mitterand to visit to the First European's tomb in 1990. It is only natural to base a new beginning on something which had proven to be a success.

But looking backwards is not enough to found a state that formed a balance with the Byzantine empire and revived the Roman empire at the same time. Innovation, dedication to learning, inventions and above all openness to foreign influences were necessary. The Carolingians were very capable of realising all of this. The Carolingian scholars produced scientific comments on the Bible, a new grammar, lay foundations for orthography, rhetoric and poetry. The Franks developed a new way of writing about history in the form of

¹ Suetonius, *The twelve Caesars*, London, 1979, II,18.

biography, e.g. Einhard's *Vita Caroli Magni*. They also developed yearbooks and historical epics like the '*De Karolo rege et Leone Papa*'. Further they produced 'annales' which started around 780, in which they explained the function of the calendar and the importance of the birth of Christ in this connection. The Carolingian scientists produced works in all different kinds of subjects such as mathematics, astronomy and geography. Subjects like these contain innovation and independent, scientific thoughts. It is exactly this intellectual capability which is also expressed in their works of art.

The early Carolingian period was certainly a new beginning for things to come. Art in general and the manuscripts in particular marked the start of a trend which did not end with the death of Charlemagne in 814, but continued throughout the Middle Ages right into the early Renaissance. They are the epitome of a starting point for developments, which was born out of the idea to renovate. Roger Hinks, in his introduction to the new edition of his book *Carolingian Art*, states: 'What matters is not the resemblance but the difference between the model and the copy.'² This is certainly a very appropriate comment. Too much literature on Carolingian Art reiterates the resemblance with antiquity. Nevertheless, it is necessary to examine the similarities with antiquity, before one understands Carolingian art and its independence from the art of antiquity. Only along this route does one learn that the Carolingians merely adopted some external features; the internal spirit is new and innovative, set apart from pagan antiquity. It is true that very many influences helped to shape Carolingian art. Beside the art of the Roman Empire there is the early Christian, Lombardic and Anglo-Saxon. Remarkable also is that the art around 800 does not ignore what immediate predecessors created. Their passion for ornament continued in the manuscripts of the Court School. Carolingian art includes a continuation of Merovingian ornamentation, the combination of contemporary Anglo-Saxon and Lombardic ornaments, the revival of the Early Christian figurative style, and the use of antique features.

² Hinks, *Carolingian Art*, London, 1935, xii

Thus, we have a model of 'historical collectivism', which means that visual arts were the means by which a culture's essential ideas were expressed and communicated. Here one minor, but sad fact becomes obvious. In its own time the art of the Carolingians had little impact beyond a few centres. It is true that there were only a few artists, encouraged by a handful of intellectuals, supported by very few patrons - the kings - and a very small number of ecclesiastical institutions. The reform of handwriting at first concerned a few thousand people at most, the rest could neither read nor write. The scholars at the court looked back to an epoch when the ordinary man had been literate. Therefore, art as a facilitator - as demanded in the Libri Carolini - for the ambitious scheme, seems rather difficult to imagine. It surely perfected it, but the impact remains debatable.

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that the Carolingian artist gave his model its own interpretation and appropriated it to suit contemporary needs. A superficial glance and it being stamped 'Copy' does not do justice to the truly innovative and entirely new concept incorporated in the works of art in the Age of Charlemagne.

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Arch of Trajan, AD 114, Benevento

Picture source Handbook of Roman Art, p. 33

Figure 7

Wallpainting, Roman, 1st century BC, Museo Palazzo Massimo alle Terme

Picture source Catalogue Museo Massimo alle Terme, p. 237

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Anla Palatina, interior, early 6th century AD, Trier

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Lorsch Gospels, St. Mark, page 148

Picture source Martin Sauter

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Soissons Gospels, Canon table, fol 7v, c. 810, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 8350

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Picture source Ars Sacra, p. 10

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Lorsch Gospels (detail), MS.R.II.I, pag. 16, c. 810, parchment, Bukarest, National Bibliotheka, Section Alba Julia, Biblioteca Batháneum.

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Wallpainting, Roman, 1st century BC, Museo Palazzo Massimo alle Terme

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Picture source Early Medieval Architecture, p. 21

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Lorsch Gospels, St. Mark, pag. 148

Picture source Marina Sajitz

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Soissons Gospels, Cannon table, fol 7v, c. 810, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 8850

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Picture source Catalogue Paderborn, p. 589

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Godescalc Evangelistery, St. Mark, detail, lat. 1203, fol IV, 781-783, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale

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Picture source Anglo-Saxon Art, p. 115

Figure 32

Harley Gospels, detail, MS Harley 2788, fol. 109v, c. 790 – 800, London, British Library

Picture source Catalogue Paderborn, p. 586

Figure 33

Lorsch Gospels, Pal. Lat. 50, fol.1, c. 810, 37.4 x 21.7cm, Rome, Vatican Library

Picture source Marina Sajitz

Figure 34

Lorsch Gospels, St. Matthew, Ms.R.II.I, pag. 26

Picture source Marina Sajitz

Figure 35

Soisson Gospels, St. Mark, detail, fol. 8IV

Picture source Catalogue Paderborn, p. 590

Figure 36

Virgilius Vaticanus, Georgics, detail, cod. lat. 3225, fol. 5v, early 5th century, 21.9 x 19.6 cm, Rome, Vatican Library

Picture source Late Antique and Early Christian Book Illumination, p. 33

Figure 37

Harrach Diptych, early 9th century, ivory, 19.6 x 11.4cm, Cologne, Schnütgenmuseum, on loan from Ludwig Collection, Cologne, Car.Iv. 1965-56

Picture source Catalogue Paderborn, p. 617

Figure 38

Harley Gospels, fol. 109v

Picture source Catalogue Paderborn, p. 586

Figure 39

Soissons Gospels, fol. 124r

Picture source Catalogue Paderborn, p. 591

Figure 40

Godescalc Evangelistry, fol. 3v

Picture source Karolingische Buchmalerei, p.36

CATALOGUE

Two Columns from Aachen Cathedral

Late Antique

Base: Bronze, h. 20 cm

Shaft: Black porphyry

Capital: Paros marble

Aachen, Palace of Charlemagne

Altogether there are

two originals and

two examples, like

marble, but also of

Corinthian capitals

Roman capitals.

Pope Hadrian allowed

formerly occupied

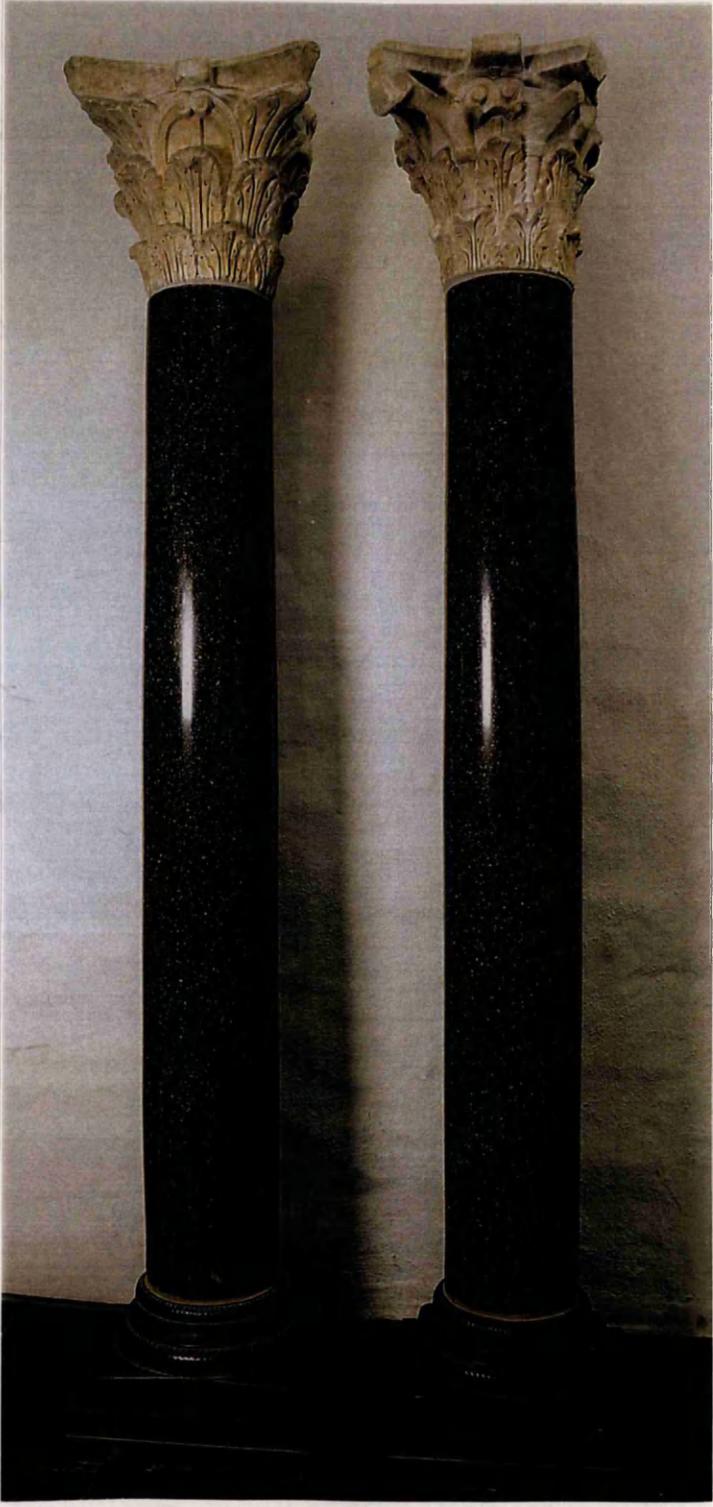
in Rome and Ravenna

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Einhard justified

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III. 1

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Chapel².

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III. 1

In quibus referabatur quid palatii Ravennatis et palatii Arelivae utque invarios ceteris exemplis tum in strato quamque in parietibus suis vobis tribuimus... cum memoris quamque in situ ceterisque exemplis de eodem palatio vobis concedimus abbas... P. E. Lehmann, "Herschafparischen und Statensymbolik", *Bistola III*, MGH, Berlin, 1892, p. 312, 313.

² Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, Stuttgart, 1996, Chapter 26.

³ *Idem, Vita Karoli Magni, op. cit.*, Chapter 26

Two Columns from Aachen Cathedral

Late Antique

Base: Bronze, h: 20 cm, Ø 40 cm

Shaft: Black porphurus, h: 233cm, Ø 32

Capital: Paros marble, h: 47cm, l: 56cm

Aachen, Palace Chapel

Ill. 1

Altogether there are 32 columns in the uppermost arcade in the Palace Chapel at Aachen. 28 are originals and four are replacements, as two broke and two further are in Paris. The present two examples, like most of the other columns, have been made out of different kinds of marble, but also other materials such as granite and red and yellow porphurus. The carved Corinthian capitals are all decorated with acanthus leaves, which is so characteristic for Roman capitals.

Pope Hadrian allowed Charlemagne to take the columns from a palace in Ravenna, which was formerly occupied by east Roman officials.¹ Also, Einhard records that columns from palaces in Rome and Ravenna were transported to Aachen especially for use in the Palace Chapel,² although from which buildings exactly is unknown.

As the columns do not have a structural function their presence in the Chapel is debatable.

Einhard justifies the use of these antique spolia by saying that there were no others available

'... *aliunde habere non posset*'.³ Their presence could also be part of the programme of the

¹ *In quibus referabatur quod palatii Ravennate civitatis mosivo atque marmores ceteris exemplis tam in strato quamque in parietibus sitis vobis tribuissemus ... tam marmores quamque mosivo ceterisque exemplis de eodem palatio vobis concedimus abstolendum.* P.E. Schramm, 'Herrschaftszeichen und Staatsymbolik', *Epistolae III*, MGH, Berlin, 1892, p. 614, Nr. 81.

² Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, Stuttgart, 1996, Chapter 26.

³ Idem, *Vita Karoli Magni*, *op. cit.*, Chapter 26

renovatio imperii romani and the deliberate association with the Roman emperors. It has further been suggested that from 741 onwards the Lateran underwent considerable renovation. In order to compete with it, Charles the Great ordered material which was able to take up this challenge.

In 1794-5 Napoleon ordered the columns as well as the railings of the upper level in the Palace Chapel to Paris, but only the columns were taken. Two of them broke in transit. In 1815, 28 shafts and 10 capitals came back to Aachen, but only in 1843 were they put back in their original place.

Provenance: Mentioned in Einhard's accounts and probably from Ravenna, although from which building is not known. Most of the columns left Aachen for a short period of time in 1815 only to return in 1843

Literature: Einhard (1996) chapter 26, Schramm MGH Epi. III (1956) p. 614, Catalogue Paderborn I (1999) p. 111, Binding (1999).

The Chalice of St. Lebucaus

Carolingian, late 8th century

Ivory, carved

H. 11.8 cm

Liège, Museum Catholique de la Ville de Liège

III. 2



III. 2

Catalogue Aachen, Karl der Große, Aachen, 1945, p. 345.

D. Rouvy, *Liturgische Kunst des Mittelalters im Apostelstifts-Museum in Liège*, Brüssel, 1962, p. 247.

The Chalice of St. Lebuinus

Carolingian, late 8th century,

Ivory, carved

h. 11.8 cm

Utrecht, Museum Catharijneconvent on loan to Deventer

III. 2

The Chalice, presented here in its original form, not in its silver mount, bears acanthus and bead and reel pattern on the foot. The stem is highly polished with two circling bands. The main body begins with a small band of acanthus. The middle part consists of eight panels with two alternating patterns, one depicting four foliated capitals, the other the same X-pattern visible on the railings (see Ill. 4) filled in with acanthus. The rim consists of scrollwork equally similar to the railings.

The Chalice of St. Lebuinus is another Carolingian object which is debated for its provenance and use. While some authors agree that it is the only surviving ivory chalice of the Middle Ages⁴ others believe that it was originally just an ordinary drinking vessel which was transformed at the beginning of the 14th century into a liturgical object by adding a silver mount.⁵

Very different in use, size and material, but similar in ornamentation are two bronze railings in the Palace Chapel. Meyer-Barkhausen compares the decorative elements, the acanthus architrave, the pilasters and the X-form on the main body with the railings. Braunfels takes the close similarity with the bronze railings as an indication that the artist was in fact the same. After he finished the railings he worked on smaller commissions such as the chalice.

⁴ Catalogue Aachen, *Karl der Grosse*, Aachen, 1965, p. 346.

⁵ D. Bouvy, *Liturgische Kunst des Mittelalters im Archbischoflichen Museum in Utrecht*, Brussels, 1962, p. 24f.

Further, Braunfels is convinced that he was from Aachen, but not part of the Court School, where all other ivories were made which Goldschmidt combined into the Ada Group. The latest catalogue on Carolingian art (Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit, Mainz, 1999), however, puts the object in close connection with the Court School.

St. Lebuinus was Anglo-Saxon by birth. His name Liofwin was latinized into Lebuinus, when he entered into the services at Deventer. He was canonised for the courage he showed during the troubled times which Deventer experienced with the Saxons in the third quarter of the 8th century. He died in 773.

Provenance: According to the curator of the Utrecht Museum, the chalice is catalogued to have originally belonged to St. Lebuinus. The object has never left the town by which it was commissioned.

Literature: Goldschmidt (1914) no. 152, Meyer-Barkhausen (1931) p. 244ff, Catalogue Aachen (1965) p. 347, Braunfels (1968) p. 137, Lasko (1994) p. 9, Catalogue Paderborn (1999) p. 697f.

Book cover of Dagulf Psalter

Carolingian, before 793

Material: carved

Size: 8 x 10 cm

Paris, Louvre, Department for the objects 500

III. 3



III. 3

Book cover of Dagulf Psalter

Carolingian, before 795

Ivory, carved

16.8 x 8.1cm,

Paris, Louvre, Department for Art objects 9/10

III. 3

The book covers of the Dagulf Psalter are the earliest datable objects from the Court School.

Together with the Psalter itself, they form part of a commission by Charlemagne for Pope

Hadrian I (772-795). This information is given in the dedication page fol. 4r and fol. 4v,

which gives the object a secure date ante quem, as Hadrian died in 795. However, it is

reasonably safe to assume that the present did not reach Rome before Hadrian died, in fact

never went to Rome at all. Goldschmidt identified the covers, which are described in the

dedication pages as those belonging to the Psalter. The covers and book receive their name

from the scribe Dagulf, who was probably active at the Court around this time. When the

separation of book and covers happened is not quite clear. The Psalter is mentioned in the 17th

century inventories of Emperor Leopold I without covers.

The four scenes, two on each panel, reflect the content of the Dagulf Psalter (Vienna,

Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 1861). The front shows David choosing scribes for his Psalms,

playing the harp and singing the psalms; the back depicts St. Jerome receiving the order from

Pope Damasus to correct the Psalter by Bonifatius and St. Jerome dictating his corrected

versions of the Psalms. Stylised acanthus leaves frame the scene. The first panel depicts the

four Evangelist symbols set in medallions in the corners, two medallions with busts of angels

in the middle and the Lamb set in a square between the two scenes. The second panel also

bears four medallions showing busts of Peter and Paul in the upper corners and two further

apostles in the lower corners, the hand of God set in a square between the two scenes and a

cherub. The space in each of the four squares is used up entirely, giving a very crowded impression - the third scene depicts five people, the first and fourth scenes depict seven and the second has eight people, leaving very little space for architectural background. The framing of the scenes, the medallions in the frames, the fold structures, the hem lines and the architectural backgrounds are all features which would be repeated in the future works of the Court School. As the book and the covers are of different measurements it is most likely that the ivories were set into a frame, which is not lost. The Psalter, which the covers once adorned, is today in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (Cod. 1861), Vienna.

Provenance: In the inventory of Emperor Leopold I (1678) the Psalter was mentioned without the covers. It was acquired by the Louvre in 1901.

Literature: Goldschmidt (1914) no. 3-4, Catalogue Aachen (1965) p. 250, Volbach (1974) p. 229, Lasko (1994) p. 22f, Catalogue Paderborn (1999) III p. 611.

The Bronze Railing

Carolingian, between 795 and 810

Bronze, cast

1.22 x 4.29m

Aachen, Palace Chapel

III. 4

This present railing is part of a set of eight, which are to stand on the upper floor of the



III. 4

Together with the columns in the Palace Chapel, this railing was part of the original set

¹ H. Haupt, *Das Aachener Kloster*, Berlin, 1823, p. 149

² Hubert et al., *L'Art de la sculpture*, Paris, 1908, p. 101

The Bronze Railing

Carolingian, between 795 and 810

Bronze, cast

1.22 x 4.29m

Aachen, Palace Chapel

Provenance: in situ, Aachen, Palace Chapel

III. 4

This present railing is part of a set of eight, which are mounted on the upper floor of the octagonal Palace Church. It consists of even squares between tall and slender pilasters with Corinthian capitals, with lines drawn diagonally across the squares and a band of acanthus foliage running along the top. Einhard (770-840), Charlemagne's biographer, mentions the railings in his account of the emperor's life, together with the bronze doors. It was believed for a long time that the railings were part of the spolia which Charlemagne brought back from Ravenna in 801. They were thought to have belonged to Theoderic's tomb. The provided measurement supported this theory⁶. Although there might have been a foreign craftsman involved, it is now widely accepted that they were made in a forgery close to the palace in Aachen.⁷ The actual date is unknown, but it is very likely that they were ordered after the beginning of the construction of the church (completed in 804).

Eight railings exist bearing four different patterns. They are installed so that the railings with similar patterns face each other. The present pattern has been compared to the one on the St Lebuinus chalice (see Ill. 2), which also shows the cross set in a square, acanthus scrolls and Corinthian capitals.

Together with the columns in the Palace Chapel, Napoleon ordered them to be transferred to

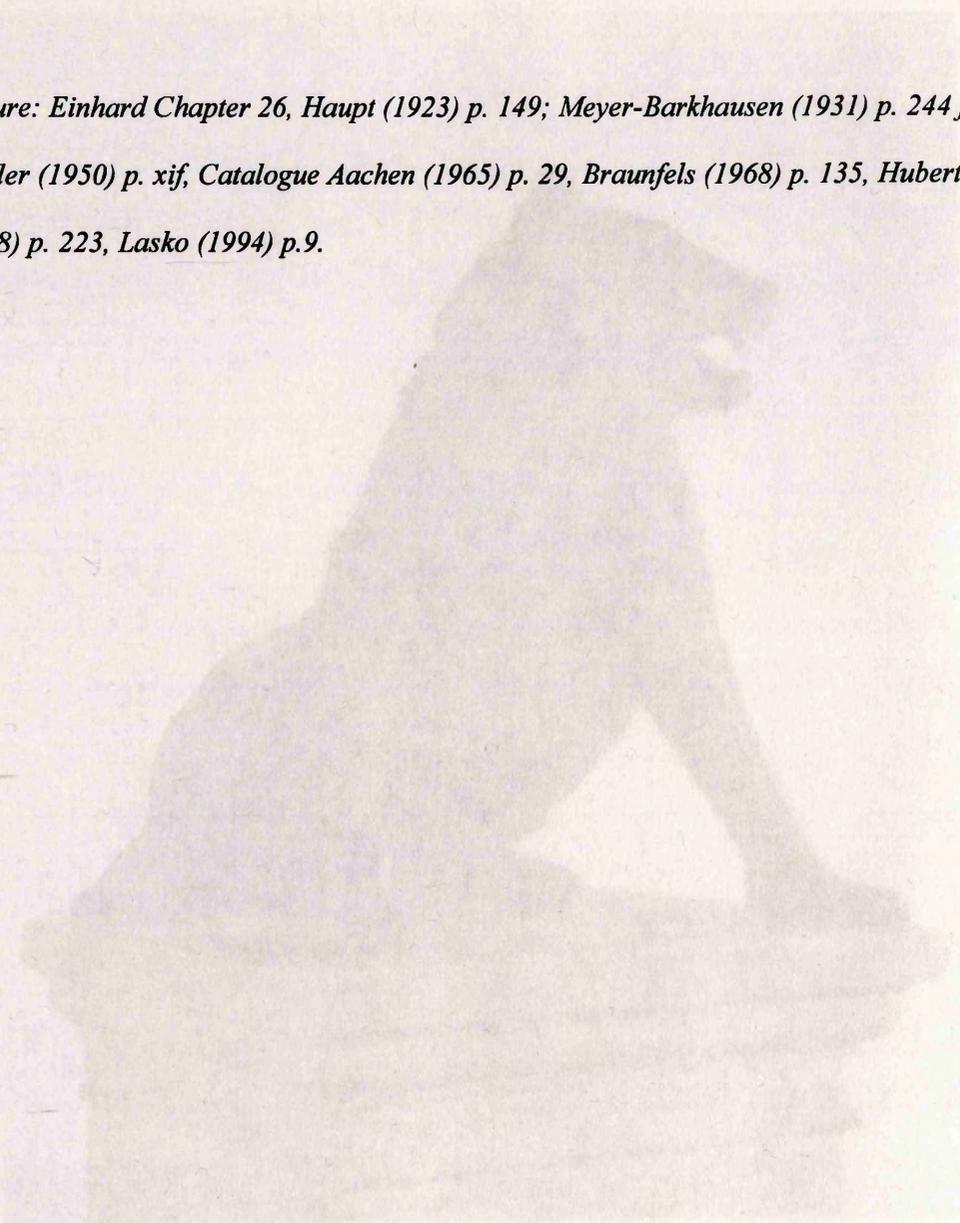
⁶ E. Haupt, *Die älteste Kunst*, Berlin, 1923, p. 149

⁷ J. Hubert et al., *L'Empire Carolingien*, Paris, 1968, p. 223

Paris in 1794, but whereas some of the columns left Aachen for a considerable amount of time, the railings actually never went. Some of the literature points out that during their reinstallation the railings in front of the throne and the altar have been mixed up.⁸

Provenance: in situ, Aachen, Palace Chapel

Literature: Einhard Chapter 26, Haupt (1923) p. 149; Meyer-Barkhausen (1931) p. 244 ff, Schmitzler (1950) p. xif, Catalogue Aachen (1965) p. 29, Braunfels (1968) p. 135, Hubert et al.(1968) p. 223, Lasko (1994) p.9.



⁸ Catalogue Aachen, op.cit., no. 6.

The She-wolf

Carolingian (?), end of 9th century (?)

bronze, hollow cast, chiselled

6.80cm

Aachen, Entrance to Palace Chapel

III. 5



III. 5

The She-wolf

The unknown provenance does not give any clues as to the dating: Roman, maybe even Carolingian (?), end of 9th century (?)

Bronze, hollow cast, chiselled

h 80cm

Aachen, Entrance to Palace Chapel

III. 5

The wolf is seated, with its weight on its front feet. The head is turned towards the left, gazing upwards. The mouth is wide open, showing teeth. The hair is rough and bushy around the neck and indicated by fine incisions over the whole body. The chest has a round hole. The left front leg and right front paw are restored and some teeth are missing.

Together with the pine-cone, also in Aachen Cathedral, this bronze sculpture is one of the most debated objects in terms of date, provenance and even identification. There is no textual evidence as to where and when it was made, what its function was or what it actually represents.

As far as its primary use is concerned, the literature is not certain, although it was recorded to have been used as a fountain figure in the 18th century, which would explain the hole in the chest. It has been in its present location since 1945.

There is also no textual evidence that the present bronze sculpture was part of the antique spolia which Charlemagne gathered on his way back to Aachen after his coronation on Christmas day in 800. Some literature states that together with the throne of Charlemagne and the equestrian bronze sculpture of King Theoderic, it was a present from an Abbot Udalrich, whose name is mentioned on the foot of the pine-cone. This attribution is very vague as the Abbot remained unidentified.

The unknown provenance does not give any clues as to the dating: Roman, maybe even Hellenistic antiquity or Carolingian? A date in the early reign of Charlemagne can be favoured in the knowledge that the bronze doors of the Palace Chapel were made during his reign in Aachen, as fragments of the moulds have been found locally.⁹ That proves that the Carolingians were capable of casting bronze sculpture. Some literature even suggests none other than Einhard – Charlemagne’s bibliographer - as the artist of the doors. He had been to Italy probably around 800 and most definitively around 808, when he delivered the Carolingian Testament to Leo III. Therefore, he might have been familiar with the bronze works of the north Italian workshops.¹⁰

In terms of its species, zoologists’ opinions range from bear to wolf to simply a dog. Different elements point to various types of animal and again, no exact statement can be made.

However, in the notion of its close connection with Charlemagne, regardless whether it was made during antiquity or his reign, and the whole atmosphere of the Carolingian renaissance, one cannot go wrong by identifying it firmly as a she-wolf.

Provenance: unknown

Literature: Kisa (1898) p. 111f, Buchner (1919) p. 40, Krautheimer (1942) p. 35ff, Schnitzler (1950) p. xiif, Schramm (1981) p. 115.

⁹ H. Picton, Early German art and its origin, London, 1939, p. 136

¹⁰ M. Buchner, Einhard als Künstler, Strassburg, 1919, p. 40

Ivory book-cover

Carolingian c. 880

Ivory

11.1 x 12.1

Oxford, Bodleian



III. 6

Ivory book-cover

(Paris, Louvre, OA 7876, 7877, 7878) and one left panel (Berlin, Staatliche Museum zu Berlin, inv.Nr. L2719), of a five partite diptych. The iconography of the triumphant Christ scene appears frequently in Ravenna such as in the baptistry of Bishop Noun and in the mosaics of St. Apollinare Nuovo.

Ivory

21.1 x 12.4cm

Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce MS 176, Madden Cat. 21750

III. 6

The ivory is in good condition. Christ's face is slightly rubbed down. A crack is running from the lower part upwards.

The ivory was worked out of a single piece. It consists of one major central scene depicting the youthful Christ with the cross over his shoulder, holding a book in his left hand, which shows the inscription SVP(er) ASP(idas). The centre is surrounded by 12 scenes from the life of Christ, the three at the top and bottom being divided with Corinthian capitals. The middle scene is surrounded by egg-and-dart. The whole ivory is surrounded by a border, whose pattern is also used to divide the remaining scenes.

The main scene 'Christ treading on the beasts' is described in Psalm 91, 13.¹¹ The remainder are, from top left: Representation of the prophet Isaiah, holding a scroll reading ECCE VIRGO CONC(ipit)¹², Annunciation, Nativity, Adoration of the Magi, Massacre of the Innocents, Baptism of Christ, Marriage at Canaa, the storm at sea, followed by four further miracles of Christ.

Although this plaque is worked out of one piece it follows the late antique tradition of the five partite diptych. Other contemporary examples like the book covers of the Lorsch Gospels (see Ill. X and X) were made out of several parts. Late antique prototypes, on which these 9th century objects must have been modelled still survive in parts or complete, one of the most famous being the Berberini ivory in the Louvre (OA94681/5744). In terms of iconography the

¹¹ 'Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet', Bible, Psalm 91, 13

¹² 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son', Bible, Isaiah VII, 14.

present object is very close to two surviving early 5th century fragments, one right panel (Paris, Louvre, OA 7876, 7877, 7878) and one left panel (Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Inv.Nr. I.2719), of a five partite diptych. The iconography of the triumphant Christ scene appears frequently in Ravenna such as in the baptistery of Bishop Neon and in the mosaics of St. Apollinare Nuovo.

The ivory is in good condition. Christ's face is slightly rubbed down. A crack is running from the lower part upwards.

Provenance: The ivory is today in a 17th century mount, but is still attached to the Codex to which it always belonged. The manuscript was made in Chelles near Paris, where a sister of Charlemagne was Abbess around 800. Codex and its cover has been acquired in 1856. Prior to this acquisition the Library has no further records of ownership.

Literature: Goldschmidt (1914) no. 5, Catalogue Aachen (1965) p. 335, Hubert et al. (1968) p. 229, Volbach (1974) p. 131, Lasko (1994) p. 23, Catalogue Paderborn (1999) p. 615 and X.7.



Back cover of Lindau Gospels

Carolingian, southern Germany, early 9th century (?)

Silver, gilt, precious and semi-precious stones, and enamel

34 x 26.4cm

New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M 1

III. 7

The book-cover is divided into four parts by a large central cross, each decorated with four *senk-schmelz* enamelled busts of Christ and surrounded by bands of cloisonné garnet inlay. All four arms are further embellished by cloisonné enamels, the two vertical arms bear medallions with zoomorphic chip-carving surrounded by garnet inlays. The background of the cross consists also of zoomorphic chip-carving. Each corner contains an embossed plaque depicting the evangelists. These are not contemporary with the overall piece. Full-schmelz enamel plaques alternating with inlaid garnet plaques surround two sides of the book cover.

This object shows features which derive from a very different origin than all the other objects of this catalogue. Anglo-Saxon elements strongly penetrated much of northern Europe, mainly through the influences of missionaries who presumably brought manuscripts and other minor arts with them, when they arrived from England. The court art of Charlemagne provides glimpses of high insular tradition and reflects it mainly in manuscripts of the early Carolingian period, such as the Montpellier Psalter before 778 (Montpellier, Bibliothèque de l'université, 409). Manuscripts produced in the Court School around 800 show some Anglo-Saxon ornament, but the style seems to have died out in the course of the 9th century. Cell work with inset garnets can be found not only on Anglo-Saxon works, but also on Lombardic, Visigothic, and Merovingian objects, such as eagle brooches and fibula.

Besides the insular influences present in these objects, the enamels indicate a familiarity with enamelling techniques, which might have been practised in Italy from the 6th century onwards through contact with Byzantine jewellers.¹³

The zoomorphic decoration and accomplished metalworking technique exhibited in the Lindau book-cover is an important legacy of the non-classical tradition to the formulation of Carolingian art.

Provenance: It is not clear when the present back cover (or even the front cover – not discussed here) were actually attached. The manuscript itself was made in S. Gall, but the covers were certainly not – and there is no evidence that they were in fact attached to the manuscript before the 16th century. The back cover was certainly not made for the manuscript since it dates to the time of Virgilius of Salzburg (died 784), the area in which the cover was made. There is no evidence that the covers were added to the manuscript before it was in the possession of the Abbey of aristocratic canonesses of our Lady under the Lindens, at Lindau (before 1691). A date of 1594, however, is stamped on the spine and this date would seem to agree with the date of the Evangelist portraits added to the back cover when it was restored and enlarged. After the secularisation of the Abbey in 1803 it passed to Canoness Antoinette, Baroness von Enzberg. On her death, ca. 1826, her heirs sold it to Baron Josef von Lassberg, who, in 1846, sold it to the dealer Henry G. Bohn, the agent for the fourth Earl of Ashburnham. After the Earl's death it was purchased by Pierpont Morgan through Sothebys in 1901. Its purchase was recommended to Morgan by his precocious nephew, Junius Spencer of Princeton, in a cable of 4 July 1899.

Literature: Hinks (1935) p. 92, Wilson (1984) p. 136, Lasko (1994) p. 3.

¹³ P. Lasko, *Ars Sacra*, New Haven and London, 1994, p. 3

The Equestrian figure of Charlemagne (?)

Early 9th century (?)



III. 8

¹² P. Leiko, *Art Sacra*, no. 21, p. 12.

¹³ P.E. Schramm, *Historische Denkmäler des Kaiserthums*, 1822, Band II, Stuttgart 1822, p. 202, no. 2.

¹⁴ *idem*, *MGH*, ca. 111, p. 201.

¹⁵ F. Mauerhahn, *Die Kaiserstatue von der Kaiser-Friedrich-Universität*, München, 1906, p. 10.

The Equestrian figure of Charlemagne (?)

Charles the Bald.

Early 9th century (?)

Bronze, hollow cast

h 24cm

Paris, Louvre, Galerie d'Apollon

III. 8

The rider and horse are cast in two separate pieces. The bearded Emperor is crowned, wearing a long mantle. His both arms are stretched forward. He holds a globe in his left hand. This is another much debated Carolingian object, for its identification and date. Some scholars believe that it actually does not represent Charlemagne at all, but his successor and grandson, Charles the Bald. Lasko argues that due to a lack of bronze castings made at the court of Charles the Bald, this is proof enough to attribute the rider to the times of Charlemagne.¹⁴ Einhard's description of the emperor's appearance and manner of dress does not help further with identification, as there is no evidence that the described outfit is particular to Charlemagne and therefore changed significantly with his successor. The rider is holding a globe, a feature which is first recorded only with Charles the Bald (840-877) among the Carolingian emperors.¹⁵ The beard also does not help with the identification. Never being worn by Byzantine and Lombardic rulers, it was very common among the Visigoths and Ostrogoths. However, all Carolingian emperors are recorded as having had such a beard.¹⁶ Yet the resemblance to Charlemagne's portrait coin (see III. 10a and 10b) is very close. Mütterich dismissed all arguments that this piece was made in the 17th century, basing her argument on the inventory of 1657, which mentions it.¹⁷ Still, she leaves the question open as

¹⁴ P. Lasko, *Ars Sacra*, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

¹⁵ P.E. Schramm, *Herrschaftszeichen und Staatssymbolik*, *MGH*, Band II, Stuttgart, 1956, p.701, see footnote 2.

¹⁶ *Idem*, *MGH*, *op. cit.*, p. 701.

¹⁷ F. Mütterich, *Die Reiterstatuette aus der Metzzer Kathedrale*, München, 1965, p. 3.

to whether the piece is contemporary with Charlemagne or made later by his successor Charles the Bald.

A note from 1634, which mentions the object regards it as a depiction of Charlemagne. It was displayed on a regular basis on the day he died: '*Et le jour de son obit on met une autre petite statue de bronze et le même figure sur le même lectrier, qui demeure la depuis les vigiles qui se chantent le jour précédent, jusqu'à la fin de la messe. Et cette statue est accompagné de quatre cierges qui brûlent nuits et jours*'.¹⁸

This still leaves the debate about the date for the horse, which was brought up by Schramm. Contemporary with the rider and a date in the 16th century have both been argued convincingly. According to Lasko and Mütherich the horse is contemporary with the rider, basing the argument on various factors such as similar modelling, same detailing, same amount of silver in the separate cast pieces.

One argument which has not been addressed before is that it might not be a horse, but a pony. The curly, dense mane, the thick short neck, the much too small head, the chubby legs and the clumsy and inelegant movement are not features of a horse. The rider appears far too big for this little animal; his feet reach half way down its legs. The proportions are wrong. If it is contemporary with its rider, it would have made sense that the artist seated the proud emperor on a horse, which would have suited his appearance and status, and would give the whole ensemble a much more balanced impression.

A catalogue entry of 1657 mentions it as a gilded statuette '*Charlemagne à cheval de cuivre doré*'¹⁹, but today there are only traces visible due to a fire in 1870. A sword was added

¹⁸ E. aus'm Werth, Die Reiterstatuette Karls des Großen aus dem Dome zu Metz, in: Jahrbuch des Vereins von Altertumsfreunden i. Rheinlande 1884, LXXVIII, p. 139ff.

¹⁹ F. Mütherich, Die Reiterstatuette aus der Metzzer Kathedrale, op. cit., p. 5.

between 1810-20, but has been removed again. The horse's tail was reattached in 1850. The rider's right hand shows cracks. The mounting is modern.

Provenance: First mentioned in the inventory of Metz Cathedral treasure in 1634. In 1807 private property of Mr. Alexander Lenoir, then in the collection of Mr. Evans-Lombe. In 1871 it was rescued from the rubble of the Hotel de Ville in Metz. It was soon part of the collection of the Musée Carnavalet, where it was repaired, before it arrived in the Louvre in 1871.

Literature: Wolfram (1890), Schramm (1928) p. 29ff, Hubert (1937) p. 112, Beutler (1964) p. 65ff, Mütterich (1965), Hubert et al. (1968) p. 224, Lasko (1994) p. 12f.

Ivory with St. John the Evangelist

Carolingian, early 9th century,

Ivory, traces of pigment,

18.2 x 9.3cm

New York, The Cloisters Inv. No. 1977.421

III. 9

Carved in high relief, St. John the Evangelist is seated on a rolled cushion underneath an elaborately decorated arch held up by two Corinthian columns. From the trapezoid behind St. John hangs an open curtain looped around the column. The corners are elaborated with flowers similar to those in late antique and other Carolingian ivories. He is accompanied by his symbol the eagle nimbed and depicted in the lunette. He is gazing slightly upwards pointing towards his open book in his left hand. It displays the words '*In principio erat verbum*' which are the opening words to his gospel. The inscription along the top edge is from the writings of the Early Christian poet *Sedulius* '*More volans aquile verbum petit astra [IOHAN]ni [S]*'.²⁰ While inscribed in a later hand, this probably replaces an earlier original.

The Evangelist symbols are closely related with the Prophet Ezekiel, who in I,10 predicted the number of the Gospels by revealing the Evangelists symbols: 'As for the likeness of Their faces, they four had the face of a man and the face of a lion, on the right side. And they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle.'²¹ St. John's attribute became the eagle, because with the beginning of his Gospel he reaches to higher spheres.

²⁰ 'Calling out like an eagle, the word of John reaches the heavens' Sedulius, Little, 'A new Ivory of the Court School of Charlemagne', *Studien zur mittelalterlichen Kunst 800-1250*, edited by Bierbrauer, München, 1985

²¹ Bible, Ezekiel, I,10

It is not certain what the Ivory was used for or was part of. Little rejects convincingly the idea that it was part of a book cover. He bases his argument on the remaining evidence of hinges. It was most likely part of a triptych with a central panel of the enthroned Christ and three missing evangelists. The direction of St. John's gaze would make sense with his position as the fourth evangelist on a triptych.

In terms of iconography this piece is very similar to the ivory book cover in the Cabinet des Médailles (inv. No. 303) as there he also gazes upwards pointing to the book. Only in one manuscript of the Court School is he depicted in this iconography (Abberville, Bib. Nat. 4, Ev. f.1536). The other manuscripts of the Court School show him dipping his pen in the ink like in the Lorsch Gospels (fol. 67f) and the Harley Gospels (fol. 161b), displaying his book in the Soisson Gospels (fol. 103) and raising his quill in thought in the Ada Gospels (pag. 110). In terms of position and fold structure the ivory comes closest to the enthroned Christ in the 'Quoniam'-page of the Soisson Gospels (see fig. 39).

Stylistically the plaque can be confidently attributed to the Court School, in particular to the artist who worked on the front cover of the Lorsch Gospels. Lasko also sees a resemblance to the St. Michael panel, now in the Grassimuseum in Leipzig (Inv. No. 53.50).

Apart from later attachment holes and the rubbed face of St. John and the body of the eagle, the ivory is in good condition.

Provenance: In June 1977 brought into Sotheby's, London, catalogued (Lot 23) and sold on the 15 December that year to the Metropolitan Museum for the Cloisters Collection. Before this it was part of the collection of Mr and Mrs Charles and Annette Cain, London. Nothing is known about the provenance of the ivory, except that it had belonged to the former owner's father, who was a collector and presumably bought it in France.

Literature: Little (1985) p. 11-28, Lasko (1994) p. 23.

Coin

Mint (?), off

Silver

Zincblende

From Charle

Back: Temple

Inscription:

From KARO

Back: XPCT

Para. 8111a



III. 10a

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III. 10b

During the beginning of the Carolingian Empire, coins were minted in a variety of places. The first

Kombluth puts it: "The first coins were thought to be as the mint was a new political structure."

Coin

Mainz (?), after 800

Silver

Depiction:

Front: Charlemagne in profile crowned with Laurel wreath

Back: Temple

Inscription:

Front: KAROLUS IMP(erator) AUG(ustus)

Back: XPICTIANA RELIGIO

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Cabinet des Médailles, Inv. Nr. 981

Ill. 10a and 10b

This type of coin was issued on the occasion of Charlemagne's coronation in Rome. On the front they usually depict the emperor wearing the paludamentum, held together in the Roman fashion with a shoulder clasp. The 'M' indicates that the coin was minted in Mainz; an abbreviation which is still in use today. On the back is a symbolised church in the form of a temple with a cross on the roof and one inside.

A coin was mainly made for propagandist reasons to promote a political programme of a sole ruler. Believed to be the most important message carriers, they were easy to copy and to mass-produce. They were destined to carry a value and to change its owner constantly and very quickly. Not only that, but they can also travel long distances. This, of course, makes the perfect medium to convey messages and carry ideological value. Although very small, their value for carrying propaganda is very high.

During the beginning of the Carolingian Empire, coins had a particular value. As Genevra Kornbluth puts it: 'The visual arts were thought to be in the service of a new unified Europe,

part of a conscious program of imperial renewal. That occasionally intense scholarly search has succeeded primarily in studies of the court art of Charlemagne. The best examples are probably the portrait coins that are clearly modelled on Roman prototypes, propagandistic objects widely circulated among the powerful even outside the courts and monasteries. It was certainly a very important turning point, not only for all forms of art and architecture, but for the entire system of visual communication.²²

Provenance: The provenance of this particular piece is unknown, however similar coins have been found at the Charlemagne's 'Pfalz' at Ingelheim

Literature: Schramm (1928) p. 3-20, Catalogue Aachen (1965) no. 16, , Schramm (1981) p. 27-29, Catalogue Paderborn I (1999) no. II.21.

²² G.A. Kornblut, Engraved Gems of the Carolingian Empire, Pennsylvania, 1995, p. 116.



III. 11a



III. 11b

Book Covers of the Lorsch Gospels

Carolingian, c. 810

Ivory

Front cover: five separate ivory panels, set in a modern wooden frame

38.1 x 26.7cm, Victoria and Albert Museum, Inv. No. 138-1866 (11a)

Back cover: five separate ivory panels, set in a silver gild frame of the second half of the 19th century, 38.5 x 27cm, Rome, Vatican Museum, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Museo Sacro, Pal. Lat. 50 (11b)

Ill. 11a and 11b

The front cover has the Virgin and Child as a middle scene. The virgin is seated on a throne, pointing towards Christ, who is held in her left arm. They are flanked by John the Baptist, holding a scroll on her right and Zechariah holding a censor and a pyx to her left. All three middle scenes are framed by an arcade. The top panel depicts two angels holding a medallion showing the bust of Christ, the bottom panel consists of the Nativity and the Annunciation to the Shepherds.

The back cover shows Christ trampling the beasts in the centre panel, flanked by two angels. The top panel depicts two angels holding a wreath with the equal armed jewelled cross. The bottom panel covers the scene of the three Magi before Harod and the Adoration of the Majay.

In terms of iconography the front cover address redemption. John the Baptist pointing towards the Christ child is explained in John I, 29: 'Behold the Lamb of God, which take away the sin of the world.' Zechariah is considered a prophet, who predicted the birth of Christ and compared it with light emerging from hell. Luke I, 79: 'To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.' The

iconography of the back cover with the middle scene of Christ trampling the beasts and scenes from the life of Christ is similar to those in the Oxford ivory (See Ill. 6).

The book covers of the Lorsch Gospels address once again the subject of antique spolia. Various opinions have been expressed in this direction. Volbach believes that the bottom panel of the back cover is a reused part from a consular diptych made for Anastasius (491-518), of which some parts are today in the Vatican Museum (Inv. Nr. 9391). Morey is convinced that the top panel of the back cover was made in 5th century and that the other panels are made accordingly to match its size. According to Lasko top and bottom panel of the front cover and top panel of the back cover are re-used panels, which have been cut back by the Carolingian artist. This would also explain the slopes in the top.

Remarkable also is the fact that different artists have been involved with the production of both covers. Different treatment of fold structures, facial treatments and frontality are recognisable. Whereas one single artist it is generally agreed for having done the front cover, some scholars like Schnitzler see three different artist working on the back cover. The closest stylistic comparison, however, can be made with contemporary manuscript illuminations made at the Court school.

Provenance: From Lorsch in 1563 to the Biblioteca Palatina in Heidelberg and 1623 to Rome, where the back cover remained. The front cover was auctioned in Cologne in 1853 for a private collection in Leven, in 1861 it appeared at an auction in Paris on which occasion it was bought for the Soltykoff collection in Paris, then part of John Webb's collection, finally bought in 1866 for the South Kensington Museum.

Literature: Goldschmidt no. 13 and 14 (1914), Morey (1929) 411ff, Schnitzler (1960) p. 26-42, Catalogue Aachen (1965) p. 254, Volbach (1976) no. 22, Lasko (1994) p. 19f, Catalogue Paderborn (1999) p. 645 and X.22.

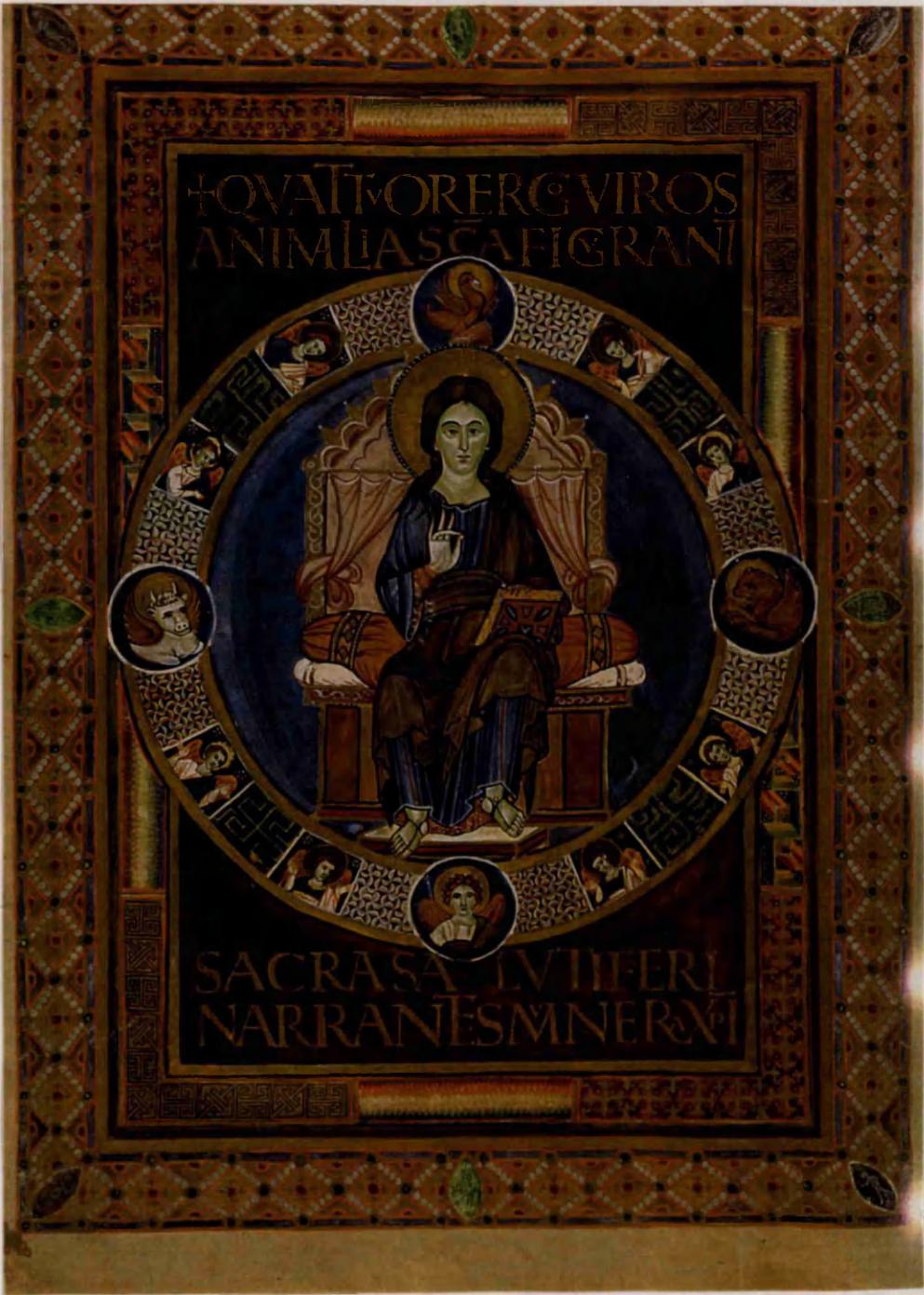


INCIPIT

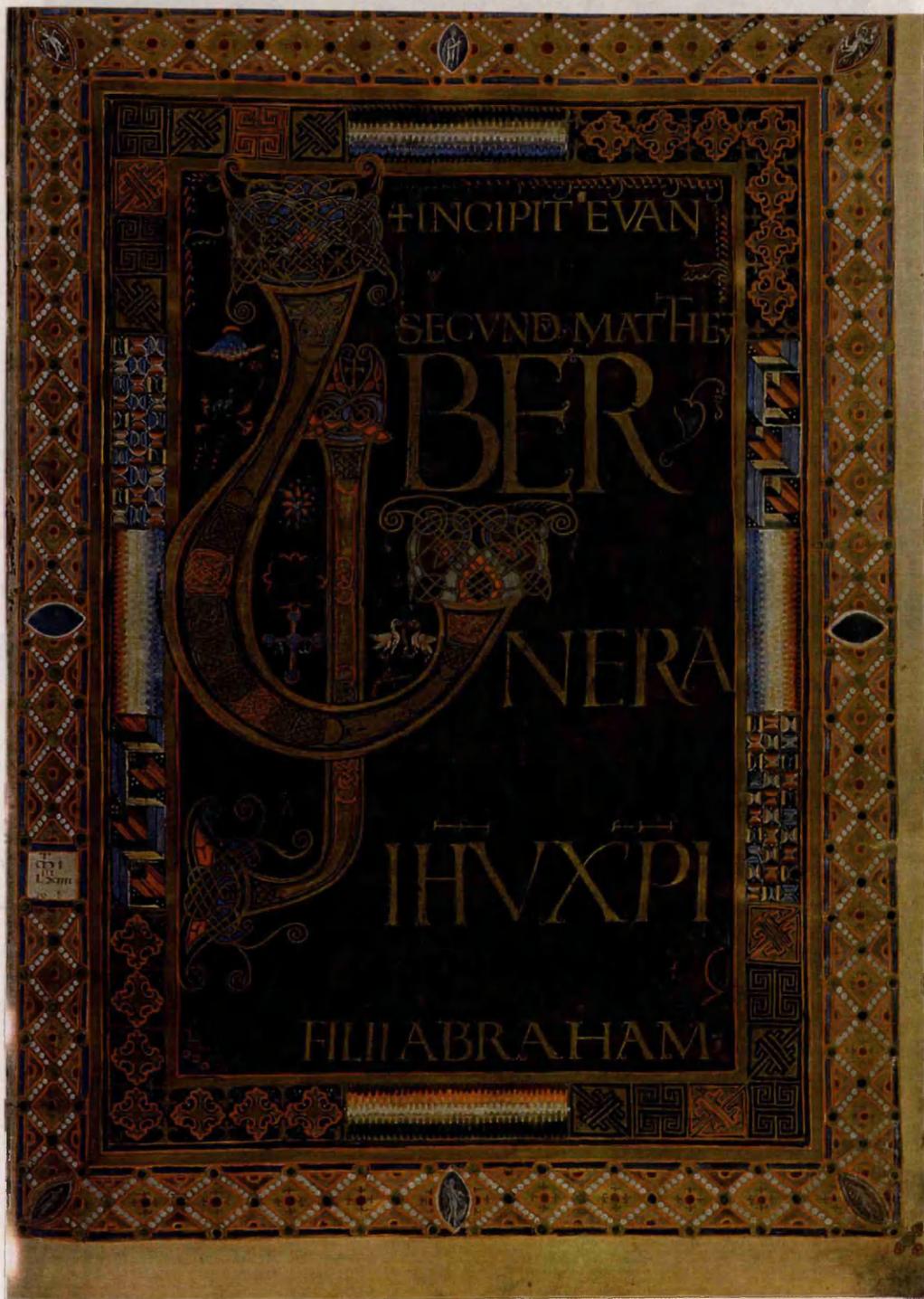
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 et leui sicut in
 ordine prius
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 gelium in iudaea
 prius scripsit
 cuius uocatio a
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 actibus fuit
 quorum in gene-
 ratione xpi prin-
 cipia praesumen-
 tibus cuius pri-
 mo a circumciso
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ARGUMENTUM

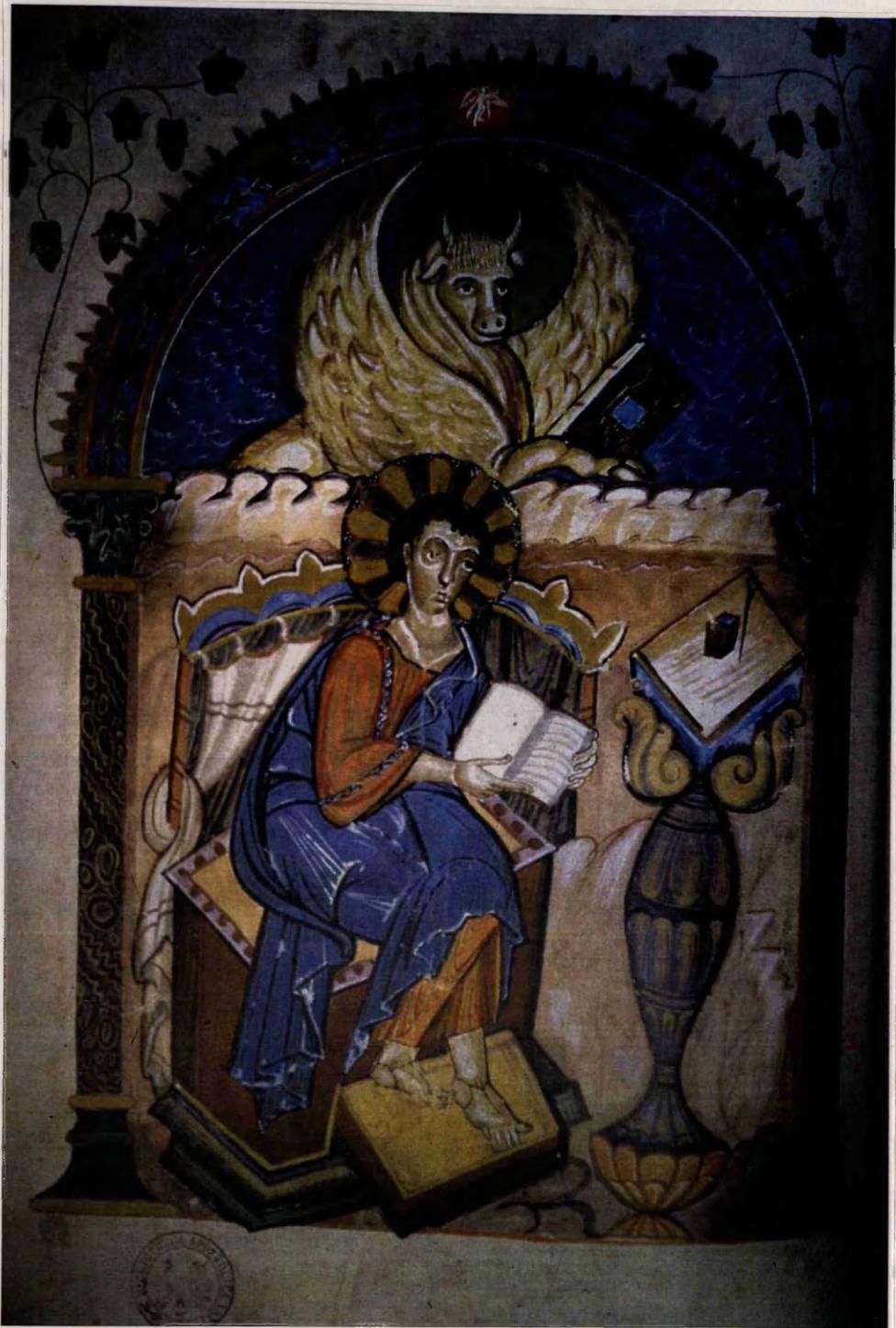
et ex utrisque
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III. 12b



III. 12c



Ill. 12d

The Lorsch Gospels

Carolingian, c. 810

Parchment

Part 1: Bukarest, Nationalbibliothek, Alba Julia, Biblioteca Batthyáneum, Ms. R.II 1

222 pages, 37 x 21.7cm

Part 2: Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pal. Lat. 50, 124 fol., 37.7 x 27.1cm

Ill. 12a, b, c, d and Fig. 9 and 34

A library catalogue from Lorsch Abbey from about 850 registers one item described as '*Evangelium pictum cum auro scriptum habens tabulas eburneas*' which has been identified as the Lorsch Gospels²³. The first part (pag. 1-222) contains the following: The introduction originally made by St. Jerome (pag. 1 "Plures fuisse", pag. 7 "Novum opus"), 12 cannon tables (pag. 13-24), Matthew page (pag. 26, Fig. 34), Genealogy of Christ (pag. 27, Fig. Ill 12a), Christ in Majesty (pag. 36, Fig. 12b), the beginning of the Gospels of St. Matthew (pag. 37, Fig. 12c) and the Gospels of St. Mark (pag. 148, Fig. 9). This first part is today in the library of Alba Julia, in Bucharest.

The second part, the Gospels of St. Luke (fol. 2, Ill. 12d) and St. John (fol. 67), is in the Vatican Museum. When and why the division took place is unknown, although the year 1479 seems to be a very likely date. Then, it was newly bound, as recorded on the last page of the book. In 1492 the Lorsch Gospels were still registered in the Monastery of St. Nazarius in Lorsch. In 1563 its library became part of the estate of Prince Ottheinrich, which was taken over by Pope Urban VIII in 1663 and so arrived in Rome, where the second part is still kept. The final division most probably took place at the end of the 18th century when the first part was registered in the inventory of Cardinal Migazzi in Vienna. It reached its present location

²³ W. Braunsfeld, *The Lorsch Gospels*, 1967, p. 2.

at the beginning of the 19th century, when Bishop of Siebenbürgen, Graf Ignaz Batthány bought it for his library.

The Gospels contain four full page illuminations of the Evangelists. They are depicted each in a different manner: St. Matthew is represented frontally, looking at his quill, St. Mark from the side also with a quill in his hand, St. Luke from the side with a book on his lap and St. John is seated frontally dipping his quill in the ink jar. Whereas Matthew is represented as the oldest with white hair and beard, John is the youngest. A fifth full page illumination depicts Christ in Majesty. The Lorsch Gospels is the only one made at the Court School which depicts the Genealogy of Christ. The Gospels further contain a full initial page prior to the beginning of the gospel of St. Matthew. The writing chosen is Roman capitals, uncials, half uncials and Carolingian minuscule, which is used for most of the texts.

Like all other books made by the Court School, it follows the Vulgate prototype of St. Jerome as closely as possible. St. Jerome was commissioned by Pope Damasus around 380 to make a revision of the existing Latin translations of the Bible and in 383 he presented the Pope with the first part of his work. From this Gospel book, the Lorsch Gospels adopted two introductory chapters: St. Jerome's preface '*Plures fuisse...*' and the letter to Pope Damasus '*Novum opus...*', where he expressed his worries about the effect of the Canon tables, introduced by Bishop Eusebius (265-339), for the Christian faith.

The Court School, where the Lorsch Gospels were most probably made, was responsible for five further main works: the Godescal Evangeliary (Paris, Bib. Nat., Lat. 1203), the Dagulf Psalter (Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 1861), the Harley Gospels (London, British Library, Harley Ms. 2788), the Soisson Gospels (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Lat. 8850) and the Ada Gospels (Trier, Staatsbibliothek, Hs.22). From imitations and copies it was possible to reconstruct at least three other lost Gospels made in the Court School.

Provenance: see Text

List of Catalogue Illustrations

Literature: Catalogue Aachen (1965) p. 254, Braunfels (1967), Braunfels (1968) p. 143, Volbach (1976) p. 229, Dodwell (1993) p. 134, Vaticana p. 74, Catalogue Paderborn III (1999) p. 727.

Columns from Aachen Cathedral, Late Antique. Base: Bronze, h: 20 cm, Shaft: Black porphyry, h: 23 cm, Capital: Paros marble, h: 47 cm, l: 56 cm. Aachen, Palace Chapel
Picture Source Catalogue Paderborn, p. 111

Illustration 2

The Chalice of St. Leoba, Carolingian, late 8th century, Ivory, h: 11.8 cm, Utrecht, Museum Catharijneconvent on loan to Devonter
Picture Source Art Story, p. 10

Illustration 3

Book cover of Dagulf Psalter, Carolingian, before 795, Ivory, 16.8 x 11 cm, Paris, Louvre, Department for Art objects 5-10
Picture Source Catalogue Paderborn, p. 61

Illustration 4

The Bronze Railing, Carolingian, between 795 and 810, Bronze, cast, 1.22 x 4.29 m, Aachen, Palace Chapel
Picture Source Art Story, p. 19

Illustration 5

The She-wolf, Carolingian (?), end of 9th century (?), Bronze, hollow cast, h: 80 mm, Aachen, Entrance to Palace Chapel
Picture Source Catalogue Paderborn, p. 117

Illustration 6

Ivory book-cover, Carolingian, c. 800, Ivory, 21.1 x 18.4 cm, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Donce MS 176, Malone Cw. 21358
Picture Source Catalogue Paderborn, p. 497

Illustration 7

Book cover of Lindisfarne Gospels, Carolingian, southern Germany, early 9th century (?), Silver, gilt, precious and semi-precious stones, gold ground, 28 x 26 cm, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M. 1
Picture Source Art Story, p. 2

List of Catalogue Illustrations

Illustration 1

Two Columns from Aachen Cathedral, Late Antique, Base: Bronze, h: 20 cm, Ø 40 cm, Shaft: Black porphurus, h: 233cm, Ø 32, Capital: Paros marble, h: 47cm, l: 56cm, Aachen, Palace Chapel
Picture Source Catalogue Paderborn, p. 111

Illustration 2

The Chalice of St. Lebuinus, Carolingian, late 8th century, Ivory, h. 11.8 cm, Utrecht, Museum Catharijneconvent on loan to Deventer
Picture Source Ars Sacra, p. 10

Illustration 3

Book cover of Dagulf Psalter, Carlingian, before 795, Ivory, 16.8 x 8.1cm, Paris, Louvre, Department for Art objects 9/10
Picture Source Catalogue Paderborn, p. 611

Illustration 4

The Bronze Railing, Carolingian, between 795 and 810, Bronze, cast, 1.22 x 4.29m, Aachen, Palace Chapel
Picture Source Ars Sacra, p. 10

Illustration 5

The She-wolf, Carolingian (?), end of 9th century (?), Bronze, hollow cast, h 80cm, Aachen, Entrance to Palace Chapel
Picture Source Catalogue Paderborn, p. 112

Illustration 6

Ivory book-cover, Carolingian, c. 800, Ivory, 21.1 x 12.4cm, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce MS 176, Madden Cat. 21750.
Picture Source Catalogue Paderborn, p. 697

Illustration 7

Back cover of Lindau Gospels, Carolingian, southern Germany, early 9th century (?), Silver, gilt, precious and semi-precious stones, and enamel, 34 x 26.4cm, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M 1
Picture Source Ars Sacra, p. 2

Illustration 8

The Equestrian figure of Charlemagne (?), Early 9th century (?), Bronze, hollow cast, h 24cm, Paris, Louvre, Galerie d' Apollon
Picture Source Catalogue Paderborn, p. 77

Illustration 9

Ivory with St. John the Evangelist, Carolingian, early 9th century, Ivory, traces of pigment, 18.2 x 9.3cm, New York, The Cloisters Inv. No. 1977.421
Picture Source Metropolitan Museum, Cloisters

Illustration 10a (recto), 10b (verso)

Coin, Mainz (?), after 800, Silver, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Médailles, Inv. Nr. 981
Picture Source Catalogue Paderborn, p. 69

Illustration 11a and 11b

Book Covers of the Lorsch Gospels, Carolingian, c. 810, Ivory, Front cover: five separate ivory panels, set in a modern wooden frame, 38.1 x 26.7cm, Victoria and Albert Museum, Inv. No. 138-1866 (11a), Back cover: five separate ivory panels, set in a silver gild frame of the second half of the 19th century, 38.5 x 27cm, Rome, Vatican Museum, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Museo Sacro, Pal. Lat. 50 (11b)
Picture Source Catalogue Paderborn, p. 734 and 735

Illustration 12a, b, c, d

The Lorsch Gospels, Carolingian, c. 810, Parchment, Part 1: Bukarest, Nationalbibliothek, Alba Julia, Biblioteca Batthyáneum, Ms. R.II 1, 222 pages, 37 x 21.7cm, (12a pag. 27, 12b pag. 36, 12c pag. 37); Part 2: Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pal. Lat. 50, 124 fol., 37.7 x 27.1cm (12d 3v)
Picture Source Marina Sajitz

Glossary

Aeneas: *Hero in Greek and Roman mythology, son of Aphrodite and Anchises. He led the Trojan survivors from their rained city to their destined home in Italy and thus is founder of the Roman People. His story is recorded by Virgilius in the Aeneid (late 1st century BC).*

Apollo: *God of Music, prophecy, healing, archery and protector of the herds. Son of Zeus and Leto. Main god in Greek and Roman mythology.*

Canon tables: *They are situated at the beginning of the Gospels of St. Matthew. They list the numbers of chapters with the same contents of each gospel next to each other. The system was invented by Eusebius, Bishop of Caesara in Palestine between 314 and 331. In the 380s Pope Damasius († 386) ordered St. Jerome to revise the system.*

Capital: *A top part of a column.*

Chip-Carving: *This method was developed in the frontier regions along the Rhine and Danube rivers around 400. Used in the beginnings chiefly for the decoration of military trappings. It is called chip-carving because the patterns, although not actually carved, are made up of wedges shaped troughs like those left by the chips cut in woodcarvings. It was later extensively used in Anglo-Saxon Metalwork.*

Codex Carolinus: *Contemporary document which gave clear instructions, how the western church had to deal with iconoclasm. Together with the Admonitio Generalis,*

Einhard's biography on Charlemagne and the Epostola de litteris colendis it forms one of the main sources for Carolingian history.

Column: *A vertical support for a superstructure usually made of superimposed circular blocks of stone.*

Court School: *or Ada-group. These categories have been introduced by Adolph Goldschmidt in 1914. They group manuscripts and ivories according to their style. The exact location of the Court School is unknown, but the court at Aachen seems to be a very likely place. Further locations for production of manuscripts and ivories during the Carolingian period are Trier, Cologne and Reichenau.*

Dptych: *A pair of tables hinged together to open like a book. Originally the two inner leaves were covered with wax and used to write on. Consular diptychs are panels of ivory elaborately carved and given by newly appointed consuls to friends and supporters, they usually have a portrait of the consul and his name.*

Enamelling: *A combination of glass, sand and soda or ashes heated together to form a clear flux to which metallic oxide was then added for colour. Cloisonné enamelling: In enamelling of metalwork, thin strips of metal bent to form the outline of a design and soldered edge-on to the surface of the metal object. The resulting cells were then filled with enamel, often restricted to one colour per cell.*

Gospels: *They are books made for liturgical use. Together with the Sacramentary and the Lectionary they are necessary for every mass until parts of all three books were combined in the Missal. Every Gospel book forms a self-contained unit and must be considered as such.*

Iconoclasm: *Movement in the Eastern Empire that denied the holiness of religious images. In 726, Emperor Leo III (717-41) launched Iconoclasm. It lasted with a short interruption at the beginning of the 9th century until 843.*

Ivory: *From antiquity onwards ivory has been a preferred material for the production of luxury goods. It was favoured to gold, because it was less attractive to thieves. Although Africa was a source for ivory, most of the surviving ivories were made out of tusks from Indian elephants (ebur indicum). During the 9th century ivory became rare in Europe due to import restrictions imposed by the Arabs. Elephant ivory was then replaced with whalebone and walrus tusks or morse ivory. Most of the surviving Anglo-Saxon pieces were produced out of this substitute. Especially Carolingian artists reused antique ivories by cutting the existing carving away. For this reason Carolingian ivories are often very thin.*

Parchment: *Sheepskin, out of which the pages of manuscripts were produced. Parchment was more frequently used than vellum.*

Psalter: *The Psalter is the book most frequently used during the Middle Ages. Its hymns and text formed not only part of the church liturgy, but were also used for private devotion.*

Pyx: *Generic term of a small box.*

Spandrel: *The triangular area between two arches or between an arch and the adjacent wall or vertical moulding.*

Tabula ansata: *A small tablet with triangular handles on each side, which carries an inscription.*

Zoomorphic:*Particular kind of pattern, which decorated Anglo-Saxon art. It***Bibliography***depicts intertwined animals.*

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