
This volume is the result of a conference organised by a sub-project of the Collaborative Research Centre 933 at the University of Heidelberg and the College of Jewish Studies in Heidelberg, entitled »The Transfer of Knowledge from Antiquity to the Middle Ages. The Conditions and Effects of Enduring Textualisation Taking the Example of Lorsch Abbey«. It is one of a series of books on material text cultures produced by the research centre, all available open access from the publisher’s website.

Stefan Weinfurter very briefly introduces the volume and sketches the current state of scholarship in »Wissenstransfer und kulturelle Innovation in karolingischer Zeit«. His introduction is followed by Ulrich Eigler’s contribution, »Überlieferung durch die Hintertür? Die Tradition klassischer lateinischer Autoren als Rekonstruktion des Wissenshintergrunds der Kirchenväter«. Eigler’s essay uses a Lorsch manuscript (Zürich, Zentralbibliothek, MS Car. C. 131) to ask what it was that drove the expansion of the library at Lorsch, particularly expansion through pagan literature. To answer this question, he considers the attitudes of Hrabanus Maurus, Sidonius Apollinaris, Caesarius of Arles and Alcuin to the education and knowledge of the Church Fathers. Eigler presents a set of ideas about late antique culture and early medieval manuscript copying, and raises interesting questions, though he is able to do little more than sketch many topics in the available space.

In »Subscriptiones in karolingsichen Codices«, Kirsten Wallenwein presents an erudite overview of Carolingian colophons. She uses a series of examples, from text entries running to multiple lines, to notae placed alongside an explicit, to explore the purposes and meanings of colophons, and convincingly shows that they are examples of knowledge transfer that took place between antiquity and the early middle ages. Wallenwein’s contribution is followed by Carmen Cardelle de Hartmann’s close reading of a poem by Theodulf of Orléans in »Bücher, Götter und Leser. Theodulfs Carmen 45«.

Hartmann discusses the poem’s suggested Christian and pagan reading material, the role of the reader, the importance of allegory and the meaning of poetry for Theodulf. Her analysis is short, but sensitive to the nuances of the poem and to its historical circumstances.

In »Die Bibliothek des Mittelalters als Wissensraum«, Michael Embach offers a brief excursus into the tensions between Christian and pagan knowledge (as represented by the seven liberal arts) in medieval monastic libraries, particularly those shaped by the Benedictine Rule. He takes Benedictine
libraries as an example of a particular kind of learning space that focused on the knowledge of God rather than on secular knowledge for its own sake. This is an interesting framework, but it poses several problems. We are introduced to the thought-provoking concept of »strukturelle Mobilisierung« of knowledge (p. 62), which denotes a vigorous textual engagement that took the form of glosses, scholia and commentaries, but this concept is not developed any further. The author’s conclusion – that Benedictine monasteries could not allow scientia mundi to replace scientia Dei if they wanted to remain centres where one could learn to know God, rather than simply be »Räume des Wissens« (p. 67) – is equally interesting. It is, however, based on the principle that these kinds of knowledge were mutually exclusive, which the author does not properly establish. The question whether or not schools, scriptoria and monasteries at this time were »embryonale Vorstufen der Universitäten« seems irrelevant to the contextual study of these institutions and the limits of their »Bildungshunger« (p. 65), and it is difficult to answer without resorting to teleological arguments.

In »Präsenz, Normierung und Transfer von Wissen«, Julia Becker asks what the organisation and contents of the monastic library at Lorsch can tell us about the perception of knowledge by Carolingian reformers, and their principal requirements. To answer this question, she examines the contents of the four known early medieval library catalogues from Lorsch, as well as a set of corrections from manuscripts made or used at Lorsch. Becker concludes that early medieval scholars sought to transmit knowledge by means of »correct« manuscripts, as a direct response to the Carolingian reform. This idea is not new, but it is lucidly demonstrated here using the primary source evidence for Lorsch.

An engagement with primary sources is also taken up by Sita Steckel in »Von Buchstaben und Geist. Pragmatische und symbolische Dimensionen der Autorensiglen (nomina auctorum) bei Hrabanus Maurus«. Steckel examines the nomina auctorum, or abbreviated names of patristic authors set in the margins of some texts to indicate the original authorship of certain sections. Taking Hrabanus Maurus as her example, she explores early medieval concepts of authority and authorship, and the ways in which these concepts shaped the self-perception of exegetes in relation to an inherited tradition. She concludes that the highly regarded authority of »teachers« – that is, commentators and exegetes – was one of the most important Carolingian innovations, an interesting idea fully supported by her sources and, implicitly or explicitly, by much recent scholarship on early medieval exegesis. Steckel’s article is well-researched and sensitive to the different ways in which authority and plagiarism were perceived in the early middle ages.

Stefan Morent’s contribution, entitled »Musikkultur des Mittelalters im Kloster Lorsch: Aspekte der Überlieferung und Rekonstruktion«, begins with an overview and history of the extant manuscripts from Lorsch, followed by a general discussion of the role of music in the early middle ages and the production of music books at Lorsch. It is a good introduction to early medieval musical activity at that
monastery, but contains little new research. By contrast, Tino Licht presents some original ideas on
the palaeography of Lorsch script in »Beobachtungen zum Lorscher Skriptorium in karolingischer
Zeit«. He re-thinks the periodisation of this script, which was divided by Bernhard Bischoff into the
older Lorsch style (beginning c. 790), the transitional style, the St Vaast style and the younger Lorsch
style. Licht argues that the scribes of the older style were demonstrably active in Lorsch before 790.
He bases his argument on the existence of three Corbie codices made in the 760s and containing
some Caroline minuscule; the discussion of these is very brief, as the full reasoning is set out in an
earlier article by the same author. According to Licht, the existence of these early manuscripts
indicates that the invention of Caroline minuscule was not linked with the court of Charlemagne. This
in turn means that the Lorsch scriptorium could have been producing Caroline minuscule from 764,
the year of its foundation. Licht gives several examples to support his claim for an earlier periodisation
of the older and transitional styles, based on the work of the scribes Donadeus and Rado, but these
seem somewhat circumstantial. Licht then provides short discussions of manuscript title pages used in
Lorsch as a more obvious symptom of stylistic change than script alone; and of the dating of a
manuscript fragment, thought to be part of the »Spätil« (presumably the younger Lorsch style) but
which, Licht argues, is eleventh-century. The article presents a set of interesting and original ideas
about the styles in use in Lorsch, but gives the impression of a set of discrete observations rather than
a consistent argument about the periodisation of a local script. Licht’s main points are thought-
provoking, particularly in the face of a general paucity of evidence for the eighth century, but the lack
of clear examples and coherence means that his argument is not fully convincing.

The palaeography of Lorsch is further explored by Natalie Maag in »Alemannische Spuren in Lorsch«.
She spends some time establishing the origin and development of Alemannic script, particularly in St
Gall and in Reichenau, before examining traces of Alemannic minuscule in the older Lorsch style.
Maag concludes that some ten Alemannic scribes left traces in some two-thirds of the extant
manuscripts. The article is very short and based primarily around the work of Walter Berschin and
Bernhard Bischoff, but is nevertheless an interesting and appropriate contribution to this volume.

In the next article, entitled »Stenographische Technik in der karolingischen Patrologie«, Martin
Hellmann examines the intellectual profile of those Carolingian scribes who used Tironian notes (a
form of shorthand used in the early middle ages) in the margins of manuscripts from Lorsch containing
patristic literature. Hellmann outlines the different uses of these marginal notes: indication of contents,
value judgements (for example, of the quality of the Latin), identification of citations and practical
information for scribes (where to begin or end, where to start a new paragraph or where the scribe left
off the previous evening). He also examines a poem of Paulinus of Aquileia from a Vatican
manuscript, which was partially written in Tironian notes. The article ends with an extensive appendix
containing transcriptions of all the instances of Tironian notes in the manuscripts discussed by
Hellmann. An important observation emerges in Hellmann’s conclusion: Tironian notes were not part
of the general repertoire of early medieval scribes, for the examples from Lorsch were almost always associated with external, often French agents.

The contribution of Matthias Becher shifts the focus from manuscripts to the relationship between kings and monasteries. In »Ut monasteria ... secundum ordinem regulariter vivant. Norm und Wirklichkeit in den Beziehungen zwischen Herrschern und Klöstern in der Karolingerzeit«, Becher explores the close relationship between kings, from Charles Martel to Louis the Pious, and certain monasteries, including Lorsch. While this is an interesting subject, Becher has omitted much of the large amount of important recent work on royal and monastic power from his discussion, especially but not limited to that of Janet Nelson. His article therefore stands as a good general introduction to the relationship between Lorsch and the Carolingian kings, but does not contribute significantly to the existing scholarship.

In »Äbte und Mönche als Vermittler von Texten auf karolingischen Synoden«, Wilfried Hartmann examines the sources of citations from a set of Carolingian church councils, which include the Synods of Mainz (847 and 852), the Council of Worms (868), the Synod of Cologne (888), and the Synod of Tribur (895). Hartmann carefully lists the sources of citations in these councils, and concludes that neither Lorsch nor any other monastery was the particular place of compilation of any Carolingian church council canon. The article is a useful reference point for those interested in the sources of council canons, though it has little to say about the history of Lorsch.

Steffen Patzold returns to manuscripts in »Correctio an der Basis: Landpfarrer und ihr Wissen im 9. Jahrhundert«. He considers a Lorsch miscellany, intended for the use of secular clergy, as a case-study of correctio disseminated by local priests, as well as of the knowledge and books possessed by such priests. He discusses the status of ministers – including »house priests« and two kinds of priests serving a community – as well as their social circumstances, education and books (using a specific manuscript example). Patzold’s discussion is nuanced and insightful, and paints a fascinating picture of the role of ministers in the early middle ages. The article is rounded off with a preliminary list of ninth-century books for priests.

In »Karolingische Gelehrte als Dichter und der Wissenstransfer am Beispiel der Epigraphik«, Florian Hartmann explores the reaction of Charlemagne and his court scholars to the Lombard use of epigraphy as a political strategy, a practice first observed by Nick Everett. Hartmann briefly considers Roman models for emulation, as perceived by the Carolingians, the roles of Paul the Deacon, Adalhard of Corbie and Angilbert of St Riquier as transmitters of Lombard epigraphy to transalpine Francia, and model collections of epigraphs that were compiled by the Carolingians around 800. The author demonstrates that such epigraph collections were known to several Carolingian scholars who composed epitaphs, and that model alphabets for inscriptions were in demand. Hartmann successfully brings together several different strands of inquiry in support of his convincing, if at times somewhat
brief, interpretation of inscriptions as part of a cultural transfer across the Alps that ultimately helped to symbolise Carolingian authority.

The conclusion to this volume is provided by Sebastian Scholz in »Bemerkungen zur Bildungsentwicklung im Frühen Mittelalter. Zusammenfassung«. Scholz sets himself the goal of summarising the volume within the context of the development of education in the sixth and seventh centuries. Scholz brings together the major themes arising from this volume: education (particularly the education of the clergy), the organisation of the Church, the development of script and the Carolingian renovatio. All these themes arise out of and feed back into monasteries, the subject of this conference volume. Such a summary is a welcome addition to any set of collected papers, and is a neat way to conclude this wide-ranging book.

References to German scholarship predominate in almost all the papers of this volume, which has sometimes meant that excellent relevant work published in other languages has been neglected. The articles are of varying length and vary in what they aim to provide to this volume, which detracts from its coherence. In addition, the translation and placement of quotes in footnotes or the text body has not been standardised across the contributions, which is jarring for the reader. Nevertheless, this is generally an interesting, focused, varied and well-presented collection, and one that reflects the breadth of the Collaborative Research Centre 933. The volume’s clarity, accessibility and colour plates make it well suited for undergraduate use, and in many cases its papers enhance existing scholarship on Lorsch and on Carolingian monasteries.