Karolingische Klöster. Wissenstransfer und kulturelle Innovation
International Conference in the Lorsch Museum Centre
Lorsch, 31 October-2 November, 2012

From 31 October to 2 November, we participated in the conference ‘Karolingische Klöster’ in Lorsch’s Museum Centre. This international conference, though completely in German, was organized by Julia Becker and Tino Licht of the University of Heidelberg, as members of the research project ‘Wissenstransfer von der Antike ins Mittelalter. Bedingungen und Wirkungen dauerhafter Verschriftlichung am Beispiel des Klosters Lorsch’, a subproject of the Sonderforschungsbereich 933 ‘Materiale Textkulturen’. The starting point of the conference was the concept of the relevance of materiality of texts. As a result of the growing interest in material culture studies and the theoretical framework of praxiography, medieval scholars have increasingly come to see manuscripts not just as vehicles of content but as material artefacts, and are studying their identity and features as material objects to understand their role and cultural meaning in early medieval society. The research project ‘Wissenstransfer von der Antike ins Mittelalter’ investigates how developments in writing practices, script and writing material took shape in the monastery of Lorsch, and how such developments in material writing culture had an effect on the organisation and presentation of knowledge in manuscripts.

The two main threads of the conference were: a. the transmission of ancient and late-antique knowledge into the Middle Ages and the role the early medieval library of Lorsch played in this transmission, and b. the reconstruction of the Carolingian “scriptorium” and library of Lorsch, starting from the fundamental scholarship of Bernhard Bischoff and Hartmut Hoffmann. The first theme, “Wissenstransfer”, lies at the heart of the above-mentioned research project; the second is part of the project ‘Bibliotheca Laureshamensis digital – Virtual Monastic Library of Lorsch’ (http://www.bibliotheca-laureshamensis-digital.de/). Both projects are housed at the University of Heidelberg.

After the welcome by Karl Weber (director of the Verwaltung der Staatlichen Schlösser und Gärten Hessen) and Hermann Schefers (leader of the UNESCO-Welterbestätte Kloster Lorsch), Stefan Weinfurter (Heidelberg) made a number of observations about the Carolingian educational reform, which, according to him, should rather be termed ‘the educational campaign’, because this seems to better fit the historical reality we can reconstruct from our sources. Four sessions followed which were envisaged to show the richness and scholarly potential of the historical material transmitted from Lorsch and its monastic library. The first session focused on literary reception practices. Ulrich Eigler (Zürich) analysed the way in which classical Latin literature was ‘reintegrated’ in Carolingian monastic education and studies through the reading of patristic authors. Then followed the contribution of Kirsten Tobler (Heidelberg), who focused on the practice of writing subscriptions by copyists in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. The sixth-century examples she showed us clearly demonstrated how editors and grammarians attempted to exert control over the text via subscriptions, in which they sometimes drew on their aristocratic status to enhance their authority. In the subscriptions they commented on the state of the text and the amount of correction needed, or they added exhortations to later copyists to copy the text correctly. In the examples from the Carolingian period, however, the subscribers presented themselves as anonymous labourers working humbly in the service of the monastery, although also in this period text control and authorisation were important. Carmen Cardelle de Hartmann (Zürich) presented a paper on the poems of Theodulf, who used the famous poets Virgil and Ovid as his example. His use
of Virgil is not surprising, since Virgil was a popular poet from the eighth century on, but this was not the case with Ovid. Theodulf’s poems are one of the few and earliest witnesses of a readership of this poet.

The second session focused on classifications of knowledge, matters of canonicity and strategies of learning in the period. After Michael Embach’s contribution on the organisation and potential of a medieval library, we heard a lecture by Julia Becker (Heidelberg), who showed how the Carolingian “renovation”, the educational reform promoted by the royal court in the service of unification of the empire, is reflected in the manuscripts of Lorsch. The focus of the library of Lorsch, as revealed by its four early medieval catalogues, was mainly on patristics, and more specifically on the works of Augustine. In several manuscripts, the suggestions for corrections in the margins show that the Lorscher scriptorium was especially concerned that the copies of Augustine’s work that the library possessed were correct. Michael Kautz (Heidelberg) gave us a ‘virtual tour’ through the monastic library of Lorsch, as it is now reconstructed at the website www.bibliotheca-laureshamensis-digital.de. In this digital environment, facsimiles are presented of all the manuscripts that have been identified from Lorsch by Bernhard Bischoff and Hartmut Hoffmann, and others; 330 Lorsch manuscripts and fragments, now spread over 68 libraries around the world. Each facsimile is accompanied by a thorough description and there are numerous ways to search the collection for specific authors or texts, and to filter according to dates, language or subject. It is a wonderful tool that allows the researcher a unique view of the ancient library. Although the initiators of the project are still struggling to finalize terms of use for some holding institutions, they have made significant progress. Sita Steckel (Münster) then moved from Lorsch to Fulda and Mainz, focusing on the scholarship of Hrabanus Maurus, monk and abbot of Fulda (822-842) and archbishop of Mainz (846-856). She gave us an intriguing insight into Hrabanus’s methods of scholarship, and his presence in the manuscripts in which he worked. Based on her intimate familiarity with Hrabanus as a scholar, she characterized Carolingian textual material culture as a ‘Zettelwirtschaft’, a knowledge management founded on notes, scraps and pieces. Christoph Winterer (Mainz) followed this up with some considerations about the profile of Mainz cathedral library and the local scriptorium in the Carolingian period.

The third session was dedicated to ‘Signs, Scripts and Artefacts’: it was a collection of papers on neums (the earliest notations of music of Western history) by Stefan Morent (Tübingen), on palaeography (the history of stages of Lorsch script) by Tino Licht (Heidelberg), and on traces of Alemannic culture by Natalie Maag (Heidelberg). On the basis of a new discovery, Tino Licht dated and localized the origin of the Carolingian minuscule around the year 765 in the monastery of Corbie. This earlier dating also has implications for the dating of the developments of the Lorsch scripts: we can now assume that the local scriptorium was already active during the 770s. The last lecture of this session looked at Tironian notes, the ancient stenographic system of signs that was used and further developed by scribes of the Merovingian and Carolingian periods. Martin Hellmann (Wertheim) showed us a fascinating array of different uses of Tironian script, ranging from remarks that indicate a scholarly use of the text such as ‘non habeo’ (‘I don’t have this’), ‘incipi’ (‘start here’) or ‘dimisi’ (‘I skipped this’) to the notation of a full poem on Amor.

In the final session, the focus was on the place of Lorsch and its library in the larger landscape of Carolingian religious and intellectual life. Mattias Becher (Bonn) gave us an introduction to Carolingian monasteries and their royal patrons. Wilfried Hartmann (Tübingen) presented a paper on the way in which the texts of church synods were produced and transmitted. These texts, often collections of citations, reflect an intriguing struggle for power, orthodoxy and survival of ‘ecclesiastical unity’. The study of the place of origin of these texts is hampered by their complicated transmission histories. Steffen Patzold (Tübingen) gave us a view into the world of the local priest, and presented manuscripts that can be understood as priest’s handbooks. These very humble manuscripts, written in a kind of Latin which we could hardly describe as ‘educated’, show us the success of the Carolingian liturgical reform at a local level. They are the kind of sources that bring us closest to
the humblest level of Carolingian “correction”. After this Florian Hartmann (Bonn) spoke about the importance of epigraphy for Carolingian scholars, and last but not least Sebastian Scholz (Zürich) summarized the results of this international conference.

All in all, the symposium was a curious but pleasant mix of general, rather introductory papers and detailed new scholarship. The contributions of this conference showed us a monastery at work as a ‘dependency’ of the royal court, revealing something of the complex interaction between Carolingian monasteries and their kings. Monasteries served as royal libraries, producing and collecting the books on which the royal court built its programme of reform, showing an eagerness for completion and for correct texts. A similar zeal is notable in the lists of books from, for example, Fulda, with which Lorsch was indeed involved in a relationship of ‘Wissenstransfer’. The Carolingian royal monasteries played an important role in the evolution of a universal script, a universal literary culture, and a universal ground level of Christianity. The Carolingian kings relied on these religious communities for their policy of unification and correction to succeed. Nevertheless, the relation between monasteries and the court was at times also problematic and not just top-down. Moreover, the relation between individual monks and their monastic communities was not always free of strain. Focusing on a particular monastery, as this conference has done, gives us thus a better and more nuanced picture of the great Carolingian “renovation”.

The first day of the conference was concluded with a concert of Stefan Morent and his Ensemble Ordo Virtu- tum in the St. Nazarius Church of Lorsch, playing an early medieval sequence in honour of Lorsch’s patron saint Nazarius and other early medieval hymns from Lorsch, St. Gall and Reichenau. On the final day, we were also shown Lorsch’s greatest monument: the ‘Tor- oder Königshalle’, which preserves layers of decorations from different periods. With the concert, the tour, the museum and the abundant presence of the ninth-century manuscripts, we could revive history, and try to grasp its meaning and impact.

The conference papers will be published in a volume of the series “Materiale Textkulturen” of the SFB 933.

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Programme

31. Oktober 2012

Begrüßung
Karl Weber, Direktor der Verwaltung der Staatlichen Schlösser und Gärten Hessen
Hermann Schefers, Leiter der UNESCO-Welterbestätte Kloster Lorsch

Einführung
Stefan Weinfurter, Heidelberg

1. Sektion: Literarische Rezeptionspraktiken (Leitung: Walter Berschin, Heidelberg)
Ulrich Eigler (Zürich): Überlieferung durch die Hintertür? Die Tradition Klassischer Lateinischer Autoren als Rekonstruktion des Wissenshintergrunds der Kirchenväter

Kirsten Tobler (Heidelberg): “Subscriptiones” in karolingischen Codices

Carmen Cardelle de Hartmann (Zürich): Von Büchern zu Göttern. Theodulfs carmen 45

1. November 2012

2. Sektion: Wissensspeicher und Wissenssysteme (Leitung: Petr Sommer, Prag)

Michael Embach (Trier): Die Bibliothek des Mittelalters als Wissensraum – Kanonizität und Mobilisierung der Strukturen

Julia Becker (Heidelberg): Präsenz, Normierung und Transfer von Wissen. Lorsch als ‘patristische Zentralbibliothek’

Michael Kautz (Heidelberg): Bibliotheca Laureshamensis – digital. Präsentation der virtuellen Lorscher Klosterbibliothek

Sita Steckel (Münster): Von Buchstaben und Geist. Materialität und symbolische Überformung des gelehrten Schreibens bei Hrabanus Maurus

Christoph Winterer (Mainz): Überlegungen zum Profil der Mainzer Kirchenbibliothek in der Karolingerzeit


Stefan Johannes Morent (Tübingen): Neumenzeugnisse aus dem Kloster Lorsch

Tino Licht (Heidelberg): Beobachtungen zur Lorscher Schriftgeschichte in karolingischer Zeit

Natalie Maag (Heidelberg): Alemannische Spuren in Lorsch

Martin Hellmann (Wertheim): Stenographische Technik in der karolingischen Patrologie

2. November 2012

4. Sektion: Träger und Akteure der karolingischen Klosterlandschaft (Leitung: Stefan Weinfurter, Heidelberg)

Matthias Becher (Bonn): Norm und Wirklichkeit in den Beziehungen zwischen den Herrschen und den Klöstern in der Karolingerzeit

Wilfried Hartmann (Tübingen): Äbte und Mönche als Vermittler von Texten auf karolingischen Synoden

Steffen Patzold (Tübingen): Bischöfe, Priesterbildung und das Kloster Lorsch: Zu den Grundlagen der karolingischen Correctio

Florian Hartmann (Bonn): Karolingische Gelehrte als Dichter und der Wissenstransfer am Beispiel der Epigraphik

Zusammenfassung von Sebastian Scholz (Zürich)