

Hartmut Hoffmann, *Buchkunst und Königtum im Ottonischen und Frühsalischen Reich*. Schriften der Monumenta Germaniae Historica, vol. 30, 1/2. Stuttgart, Anton Hiersemann, 1986, text vol.: 566 pp.; plate vol.: 310+, \$265.00

Warren Sanderson

Volume 16, Number 1, 1989

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1073330ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1073330ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

UAAC-AAUC (University Art Association of Canada | Association d'art des universités du Canada)

ISSN

0315-9906 (print)

1918-4778 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Sanderson, W. (1989). Review of [Hartmut Hoffmann, *Buchkunst und Königtum im Ottonischen und Frühsalischen Reich*. Schriften der Monumenta Germaniae Historica, vol. 30, 1/2. Stuttgart, Anton Hiersemann, 1986, text vol.: 566 pp.; plate vol.: 310+, \$265.00]. *RACAR : Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review*, 16(1), 62–63. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1073330ar>

---

## LIVRES / BOOKS

---

HARTMUT HOFFMANN *Buchkunst und Königtum im Ottonischen und Frühsalischen Reich*. Schriften der Monumenta Germaniae Historica, vol. 30, 1/2. Stuttgart, Anton Hiersemann, 1986, text vol.: 566 pp.; plate vol.: 310+, \$265.00.

Hartmut Hoffmann's work provides a fundamental contribution to the study of manuscripts of the tenth century and the first half of the eleventh century. It helps clarify and correct our knowledge of a great many manuscripts, whether illuminated or not, and explores the events and developments of the period that had direct bearing upon their creation. Constructed solidly on the twin pillars of thorough familiarity with the literature of the field and sensitive paleographic analysis, it includes unusually informative discussions of several very well-known exemplars, and perhaps as many less noble manuscripts that are so often essential in the reconstructing of history. The specific histories that concern the author are those of scriptoria, scribes, miniaturists, donors, and also ruler portraits, mostly in Germany. An almost exclusive concern with the ateliers that produced the highest-quality volumes for the well-educated aristocracy of the Holy Roman Empire north of the Alps results in the exclusion of cathedral scriptoria, for they rarely met such exacting standards. The manuscripts of Metz, Cologne, and Salzburg also remain mostly outside the author's scope, but for entirely different reasons. It is to our good fortune that Hoffmann ventures beyond his stated chronological bounds frequently to consider related Carolingian manuscripts, and occasionally to pursue historic tendencies well into the twelfth century.

Although the book is organized into four chapters and two short concluding appendices, it may best be considered as consisting of two major, functionally different sections: a historical narrative and a catalogue of manuscripts. The first two chapters of the historical narrative, "The Art of the Book and the Ruler Portrait" and "Scribe, Illuminator, and Donor," are well written, richly documented, and developed so logically and coherently that the reader's interest seems to be constantly spurred on. The second chapter concludes with subsections concerning the localization and dating of manuscripts and the problems posed by manuscripts in which hands from different monasteries co-operated. Explanations set forth so clearly in these subsections were undoubtedly intended to lead the reader into the catalogue that forms nearly 80 percent of the text. However, interposed between the second chapter and the huge catalogue is a third chapter, "The Master of the Registrum Gregorii," that drastically changes the pace and thrust of the book. After that we move abruptly into the omnibus fourth chapter, the second major section of the author's design.

Hoffmann states in his introductory remarks that his book began with an interest in the Master of the Registrum Gregorii. Though the essay that resulted presents a painfully obvious flaw in the book's organization, it is an exemplary piece of scholarship. He begins by successfully linking the marriage contract of Theophanu and Otto-ii of 972 (Wolfenbüttel, Stadtarchiv, 6 Document 11) with the Master's oeuvre through intensively detailed and careful stylistic and iconographic comparisons with many of that artist's known works. In the process, a dynamic is set forth that leads to other important constructions. First, the presence in the marriage document of Carolingian Turonian influences leads Hoffmann to the Trier-Echternach scriptoria of ca. 970, where within a decade the Master would be demonstrably active. Second, a painstaking examination of this Master's works leads to a reorganization of the biography postulated by Nordenfalk and to fairly well-justified hypotheses of two lost manuscripts by the Master. Third, the author discards Nordenfalk's identification of the Master with the Johannes of Italy who had been summoned north by Otto-iii (ca. 996!); and fourth, he discredits Kempf's identification of the Master with Benna of St. Paulinus to which in fact there has been much weighty opposition in the literature. After all this, the author fails to provide a conclusion that would succinctly state his own answer to his question of "Who was the Master of the Registrum Gregorii?" and the reader is left to glean through the chapter once again.

Of the 30 known codices with ruler portraits now known, the author recognizes that most were liturgical manuscripts. The linkage of rulership and liturgy proves close at hand in Carolingian, Ottonian, and Salian examples. From texts that either accompany or are near to ruler portraits, Hoffmann sees that the ruler's donation for the production of the codex makes him a *frater* of the monks and enlists the monastic community's prayers for him, his wife, and his children. Names included in manuscripts, whether of rulers, lay donors, or scribes, and whether bought materially or not, bore with them the hope that the person named would receive the prayers of its readers. The liturgical codex is for the ruler a kind of *Liber vitae*. Combined with these beliefs from the latter part of the tenth century, the emperor in a mandorla was represented as the *vicarius Dei* (cf. Aachen, Cathedral treasury, Liuthar Evangelary, f. 16). Ultimately, Hoffmann concludes that the ruler portrait in the liturgical book placed the emperor within the imperial church and helped create a reciprocity between him and the leading strata of the clergy. During the investiture controversy, the unity of *regnum* and *sacerdotium* was broken, "Buch und Bild" lost their former symbolic meaning, and the ruler portrait disappeared from liturgical codices, to be seen

instead thereafter in chronicles, cartularies, and other historical works.

The outcome of the investiture controversy led to profound changes in the lives of those who produced manuscripts. The author found that most of our "records" of lay scribes or lay manuscript painters during the ninth and tenth centuries stem from misunderstandings of such words as *facere*, *scribere*, and *conficere* by which we tend to identify the scribes and craftsmen who produced the manuscripts of the Middle Ages. From multiple instances Hoffmann shows that contrary to the currently accepted belief, such words usually meant "to permit or allow to have made or written." They often referred not to the craftsman, who was normally of relatively low social standing, but to the donor. Moreover, he shows that *scribere* in medieval documents meant "authored" or "copied," depending on a variety of factors. From the evidence of the manuscripts themselves, those who participated in making manuscripts in the ninth century were apparently always clerics. Even when the scribe is mentioned as an *advocatus laicus* (as in Paris BN lat. 4632, fol. 59v.), the author shows rightly that this was patently impossible. However, for the tenth century he points out a very few exceptions where lay scribes were paid to "write" (i.e., copy) manuscripts (cf. Munich Clm. 6266, ordered by Freising clerics from Metz laity). In the early and mid-eleventh century, instances of paid scribes, whether clerical or lay, are only slightly more frequent, hence still unusual. In the mid-eleventh century at the latest, the author shows, laymen who worked as miniaturists (pp. 76ff.) are documented at Werden, Echternach, and St.-Germain-des-Prés, but only at the last is the name of a decorator-scribe and most likely painter (Ingelardus) provided. During the twelfth century, with the investing of clerics limited to the Church, mention of paid and travelling lay scribes is much more frequent, including even an occasional description of their portable *instrumenta operis*.

That we know the names of any ninth-century artists is remarkable, since according to Hoffmann's inquiries the artist was no more than a handworker who would not have considered daring to pierce the veil of his anonymity. The sculptor Tuotilo's name is known exceptionally from St. Gall only because he was headmaster of the monastery's outer school and a *homo itinerarius* as well as an artist. Almost certainly he earned his reputation as a man of many travels in connection with his handicrafts rather than his teaching. Although the codices that an artist decorated were mostly liturgical, he did not (unless he was more than merely an artist) derive from his work the same benefits of prayers by the readers of his work as did the scribe or donor. There was an essential difference between scribe and painter that went beyond their relative societal positions: script was necessary for a book, but illuminations were merely optional and could be sinful. Benedict of Aniane (Cornelimünster), the great reformer of Carolingian monasticism, Hrabanus Maurus, Sigebert of Gembloux, and Bernard of Clairvaux are just a few who took strong positions against art and decoration. Consequently, from the ninth through the eleventh century and into the twelfth, when artists' signatures do appear in codices they are usually cleverly concealed. That certainly con-

trasts with the easily read names of scribes and donors. In spite of this situation, Hoffmann's survey of the sources shows that some painters were often highly valued.

Finally, the catalogue chapter four, entitled "Ottonian and early Salian Scriptoria," organizes tenth-through mid-eleventh-century manuscripts by scriptoria. The manuscripts selected are localized and dated with relative precision, usually from internal historical and paleographic information. Each of ten subchapters is devoted to the works of a major scriptorium, and seven of the ten include closely related scriptoria as separate entries. Each scriptorium is discussed concisely in an essay that typically begins with a historical sketch and moves to the development of characteristic scripts in necessary detail. Hoffmann considers the following scriptoria: Corvey, an uncertain location in Saxony, Fulda and Hersfeld, Lorsch, Mainz, Regensburg, Reichenau and its offshoot at Würzburg's cathedral chapter (an exception), St. Gall, then Seeon and Freising, Tegernsee and Niederaltaich, and finally three at Trier, and another at nearby Echternach. For each, following the introductory essay, individual manuscript entries are organized alphabetically by the locations of their repositories. The folios assigned to the hands that accomplished each manuscript are clearly indicated as are various interrelationships among hands. At this most basic level, some of the distinctions made in the historic narrative chapters among the functions of scribe, illuminator, and donor, and their identifications, prove helpful in changing, delimiting, or reinforcing traditionally held views of specific manuscripts.

Hoffmann's work provides substantial bases for assigning specific manuscripts to the scriptoria of their origin. It opens a new chapter in the continuing quest to clarify the stylistic limits of, and interrelationships among, the outstanding centres of artistic creativity of the Holy Roman Empire, especially between ca. 900 and ca. 1050. The author's understanding of early medieval scriptoria will help provide underpinnings for inquiries by scholars concerned not only with a relatively broad range of manuscripts and their illuminations, but also with problems of the localization and the dating of ivory panels, enamelwork, and metalwork that frequently once adorned luxurious bookcovers. We have in *Buchkunst und Königtum* a seminal consideration of the art of bookmaking, largely from the beginning of the tenth century to the middle of the eleventh, in the mostly monastic scriptoria of West Germany and Switzerland.

Both the text and plate volumes are themselves very well-made books. The plates present black-and-white exemplars of hundreds of texts, and sometimes of decoration, at actual or near-actual size. This is a book of impressive learning. Despite its remarkably high price, no serious research library can afford to be without it.

WARREN SANDERSON  
Department of Art History  
Concordia University  
Montreal, Quebec H3G 1M8