In 2016, Julie Casteigt, Dietmar Mieth, and Jörg Rüpke published their research results on the so-named Wolfram candelabra in the Erfurt Cathedral under the title “The Bearer of the Giant Torah of Erfurt: A Religious-historical Hypothesis for an Overlooked Judaicum” (fig. 1). The group came to the conclusion that the Wolfram candelabra could initially have been the bearer of a giant Torah roll, which had undergone a ritual change of function as a consequence of a process of appropriation by the Christians in the wake of the pogrom of 1349, by transforming it into the figure of a candle bearer.1 With this, Casteigt, Mieth, and Rüpke initiated a discussion, which once more proves how fruitful it is to look at an object from the perspective of a variety of disciplines, in order to re-evaluate prevailing research theories of medieval art, which over the course of the decades, mutate into seeming truths by constant repetition. From the vantage point of art history, I have noticed – and therefore the title of my contribution – that Sabine Poeschel’s fundamental study on the Wolfram candelabra, and its interpretation as a depiction of the Prophet Isaiah2 or Anton Legner’s3 and Rainer Budde’s4 basic research of the Romanesque sculpture in Germany purports the theory that the Wolfram candelabra stands isolated in the history of art. At first glance, this might be viewed as a life-sized human figure bearing three

3 Anton Legner: Romanische Kunst in Deutschland, München 1996, pp. 69 f., 179, with ill. 297.
4 Rainer Budde: Deutsche Skulptur 1050–1250, München 1979, pp. 55 f., with ill. 88–89.
Fig. 1: Wolfram candelabra, ca. 1160. Erfurt, Cathedral
candles. But if we take the words of Horace, quoted at the outset, together with the invocation by the two donors, Hiltiburc and Wolfram, in the inscription on the belt of the figure “Wolferamu [s]. Ora p [ro] nobis [an] c [t] a dei genetrix / Hiltiburc. Ut digni efficiamur gra [tiae] dei”, then the Wolfram belongs to the series of representative images which have been continuous since antiquity up to the Middle Ages. As early as 1984, Adolf Reinle had placed the “silent assistant” there; unfortunately, the subsequent research did not take Reinle’s findings into consideration.

Of course, what makes the Erfurt bronze unique is that here we do not have an example of the usual representative images of princes, kings, or emperors. Such royal examples have been handed down to us through the ages by numerous sources, often in connection with pledges. The Wolfram figure, on the other hand, originally showed a man in secular clothing bearing three candles – before its mutilation – which cannot be understood without its liturgical and thus meaningful contexts.

Two facts were always brought into the field for the purposes of dating the Wolfram candelabra: In 1157, the ministerialis from Mainz Wolframus Scultetus, was mentioned twice in Erfurt. The “Wolfram” candelabra is named after the donor Wolfram Scultetus, and the cathedral was already under construction in 1154, thus the dating of the candelabra could well be 1157.

---

6 Reinle: stellvertretendes Bildnis (see fn. 5), pp. 320ff.
9 See the summary of the differing opinions by Drescher: Herstellung Wolfram-Leuchter (see fn. 8), pp. 188–191.
If one follows the studies of Adolf Franz and those of Ludwig Eisenhofer of the medieval liturgy and leaves the worn paths of decades of art historical research, then the medieval age, especially in the case of votive Masses, placed great emphasis on a certain number of candles. Twelve were placed at Masses in honor of the Apostles, nine at the angelic office on Thursday, seven at Masses in honor of the Holy Spirit, five in honor of the Holy Cross (correspondent to Christ’s wounds), and three in honor of the Trinity.10

The last number, in turn, creates a possible connection to the original liturgical integration of the “Wolfram” candelabra, especially if one remembers the donor’s inscription on his belt. In addition, in 1501/02 Master Knappe poured two bearings for the already existing main bell of the cathedral, which is also called “Wolfram”, according to the relevant invoice in the archive of the Erfurt Cathedral.11 This coincidence leads to the conclusion, and here I am in agreement with Hans Drescher, that at the time, Hiltiburc and Wolfram donated a Mass together with the corresponding bell.12 Unfortunately, this bell was recast six times between 1416, when the bell tower of the cathedral burned down, and 1942, whereby its material evidence in the present discussion has been lost.13

The fact that the bell and the figure were related to each other is demonstrable in the 15th century. In 1983, Hans Gerhard Meyer was able to confirm the Wolfram candelabra existed as of 10 May, 1425, on the occasion of the feast of St. Yvo Hélory by the Erfurt Law Faculty. Yvo, canonized on 19 May 1347, was patron of the jurists: “In primis et secundis vesperris et in missa locentur super altari beati Yvonis in sacrista 2 candele, quelibet de dimidia libra et super candelabrum in medio chori, quod dicitur Wolveram, 3 Candele de tribus libris que ardebunt dictis horis continue …”14

Art historical research has always quoted these lines from Hans Gerhard Meyer. But if one reads the document to the end, the Wolfram bell, including the time of its ringing at the festivities, is precisely named

12 Drescher: Herstellung Wolfram-Leuchter (see fn. 8), p. 199.
14 Meyer: Erfurter Wolfram (see fn. 8), p. 137. The source was published by Hermann Weissenborn (ed.): Acten der Erfurter Universität, part II (Geschichtsquellen der Provinz Sachsen und angrenzender Gebiete, publ. by Historische Commission der Provinz Sachsen, vol. 8, part 2), Halle 1884, p. 95.
“...Et propter conformitatem ad solemnizandum festum predictum post primam pulsacionem cum campana, que dicitur Wolveram, et est tercia post maiorem, domini illustres comites barones nobiles doctores et scolares omnes vel maior pars, qui commode possunt, congregentur in ambitu ecclesie beate Marie predicte et quando pulsatur sexta, que est inmediate ante missam ad chorum, cum campana, qui dicitur nova et est secunda post maiorem, intrantibus pueris ad chorum, tunc domini precententibus pedellis cum baculis ... Et ad turrim fiat bona prepulsacio ante sextam cum campana, que dicitur Wolveram, pro congregacionem dominorum doctorum et scolarium, qui misse solemniter intererunt; ceterum pulsabitur sicut in diebus celebritus apostolorum...”

If we open the methodological aperture in favor of a cultural-historical approach and place the Wolfram candelabra in its liturgical context, then the figure does not stand alone in the period of the fading Romanesque and the beginning of the Gothic. On the contrary, the Wolfram proves to be an integral part of a group of anthropomorphic Christian cult implements, augmented from ca. 1250 onwards, with angelomorphic implements due to the increasing Eucharistic piety. My main theme for the following sections is – and therein I follow Adolf Reinle – the dating of the preserved examples of “silent assistants.”

In order to understand the origin of this delight in a zone between reality and trompe-l’œil, to which we owe the genesis of those “silent assistants”, let us describe these against the background of those ceremonies from whose splendor they once arose, a splendor born from the synthesis of sumptuous ceremony and spoken word. At the beginning stands the Freudenstadt lectern (fig. 2), which was carved ca. 1150, since it is chronologically closest to the Wolfram candelabra. Here the figures of the four Evangelists – like Atlantes – bear the actual lectern case and are positioned according to the tradi-

---

15 Weissenborn (ed.): Acten der Erfurter Universität (see fn. 14), pp. 95 f.
17 Reinle: stellvertretendes Bildnis (see fn. 5), pp. 320 f.
Fig. 2: Freudenstadt lectern, ca. 1150. Freudenstadt, municipal church
tion of the Evangelists in the four cardinal directions: Matthew in the north, Mark in the east, Luke in the west, and John in the south.\(^{19}\) The inside of the lectern case reveals a thick layer of soot, which could be caused from burning the frankincense. In addition, carefully drilled channels lead from the inside out into the mouth, jaws, muzzle, and beak of the evangelical symbols.\(^{20}\) Thus it would be conceivable that, before the reading of the Gospels, a smoldering thurible had been hung or placed in the lectern case, and the smoke of the frankincense billowed from the mouths of these symbols.\(^{21}\)

The Freudenstadt lectern can be placed between two further examples with sensory effects: In 971, Foulques, Abbot of Loches, had a bronze gospel lectern cast with a mechanical gilded eagle on its top. If the deacon wanted to put the Gospel Book upon the animal for the reading, the bird spread its wings to support the Book, and could, “as it were, artfully move its neck as if it were eager to listen and in so doing, emitted a cry”. As to the censing of the Gospel lectern, there was a small pan for glowing charcoal inside the eagle: Frankincense granules were cast upon it, and the perfume wafted out from the animal.\(^{22}\) A second example is Villard d’Honnecourt’s “Carnet” which provides two drawings (fol. 7\(^{r}\) and fol. 22\(^{v}\)) of eagle lecterns.

\(^{19}\) According to Legner: Romanische Kunst (see fn. 3), p. 58.

\(^{20}\) The whole situation is difficult to assess because medieval carvers partially dried the wood over an open fire to speed up the drying process, which also led to traces of soot. Such traces can be found in Bernt Notke’s Triumphal Cross in the Cathedral of Lübeck; for further information see Hans Westhoff, Hilde Härlin, Ernst-Ludwig Richter, Heribert Meurer: Zum Freudenstädter Lesepult. Holztechnik, Fassung und Funktion, in: Jahrbuch der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen in Baden-Württemberg 17 (1980), pp. 41–84, here pp. 59–61, 79f.

\(^{21}\) In Legner: Romanische Kunst (see fn. 3), pp. 58f., there is the statement that no soot traces could be found in the drilled canals to the mouths of the evangelist symbols, and therefore the simultaneous function as a lectern and thurible is unlikely. This information is not complete. The examinations of the lectern in 1977 showed that the channels and holes in the mouth, jaws, and muzzle, of the symbols of Matthew, Mark, and Luke were reworked; therefore no soot was detectable here. However, the canal and the hole in the beak of John’s eagle were not reworked. Here soot traces, which also reach as far as the outer edge of the beak are swiftly found; see Hans Westhoff: Zur Frage der Funktion des Lesepultes als Weihrauchständers, in: Hans Westhoff, Hilde Härlin, Ernst-Ludwig Richter, Heribert Meurer: Zum Freudenstädter Lesepult. Holztechnik, Fassung und Funktion, in: Jahrbuch der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen in Baden-Württemberg 17 (1980), p. 59.

\(^{22}\) “Pulpitum evangelii tal modo fecit ut essent IV emicedia altrinsecus e regione in modum crucis posita, quae es aere ductilia ad libitum artificis per loca scalprata et deaureata, postibus undique secus deargentatis, in septentrionali parte, fusilem habeant aquilam optime deaureatam, quae interdum alas stringebat, inderdum alis expansis capacem evangeliorum codici locum pandebat, colloque, quasi pro libitu, artificiosae ad audiendum retorto et iterum reducto, immissis fragrantiam superimpositu thuris emittebat […]”, Jean Mabillon (ed.): Annales Ordinis S. Benedicti, lib. 47, t. III, Paris 1706, p. 609;
for the period after the Freudenstadt lectern. On fol. 22v, Villard sketches the longitudinal section through a mechanical eagle and an hitherto unknown scribe, called “hand III”, provides information on the pulley mechanism inside the animal (fig. 3). While the deacon laid the Gospel Book on the bird, he could use a pull rope to make the eagle turn his head from the front to the back, to the right, and to the left during the reading, and finally return to the starting position: “Par chu fait om dorner la teste del aquile / vers le diache ne kant list la / vengile”.23

Durandus (IV, c. 24, n. 20) gives the lectern, on which the Book is placed during the reading of the Gospel, the name “Aquila”, and refers to Psalm 17, 11: “et volavit super pennas ventorum”.24 For our discussion however, the sketch of the second eagle lectern (fol. 7r) in the “Carnet” is the more revealing (fig. 4). Here Villard not only draws an eagle, but also the two fig-

---


---

Fig. 3: Detail drawing of an eagle lectern, ca. 1230. Villard d’Honnecourt, Portfolio. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms. Fr. 19093, fol. 22v
Fig. 4: Drawing of an eagle lectern with two thuriferarians, ca. 1230. Villard d’Honnecourt, Portfolio. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms. Fr. 19093, fol. 7r
urines of thuriferarians who gently swing their thuribles. They stand below the bookrest of the lectern on volutes of foliage that grow midway up out of the central column. Whether these figures were mechanical “little figures” is not evident from Villard’s comments. The vigorous dangling of their thuribles, however, suggests this conclusion.

The particular ceremony, which led to the genesis of these figures, was the censing of the Gospel Book before the reading, which probably already had a special significance in the 9th century. In any case, ever since the 11th century, the missals contained the text of the prayer that was to be spoken during the censing of the Gospel Book: “With the fragrance of His heavenly inspiration, the Lord enlightens our hearts to hear and understand the doctrine of His Gospel.”

The action was integrated into a larger ceremony: The deacon says a prayer to purify himself, receives a blessing from the priest, he then takes the Book of the Gospels from the altar and goes to the reading place, whereby two acolytes with burning candles and a thuriferian precede him. The book is placed on the lectern and the declamation of the holy verses follows the described censing.

The declamations of the Epistles and Gospels were even more splendid when performed from the pulpits or rood screens, which bore the stage-like character of a *sacra repraesentatio*. The subdeacon read the Epistles on the southern side of either the rood screen or, as in Italy, from the southern side of the pulpit. He climbed the northern spiral staircase of the rood screen accompanied by an acolyte and crossed the platform of the rood screen to the southern side to perform the declamation of the Epistles. After the reading, they descended again using the southern staircase. The ceremony of the Gospel reading took place in the opposite direction during a procession, in which a cross was carried at the front of the procession in some churches and a ministrant always led the cortege with a thurible followed by two acolytes with candles; the subdeacon walked behind them with the Book of the Gospels followed by the deacon. The group ascended via the southern

---

25 Hahnloser: Villard de Honnecourt (see fn. 22), pp. 33 f., pl. 13; Bechmann: Villard de Honnecourt (see fn. 23), p. 300, assumes that the mechanical eagle on fol. 22v could be a detail drawing of the eagle from the lectern on fol. 7r. Barnes: Portfolio (see fn. 23), pp. 57 f., with color plate 16.


spiral staircase and crossed over to the northern section of the platform. The deacon then held the reading on the northern side of the rood screen. Afterwards the group descended again over the northern spiral staircase.  

Certainly, it is this delight in the ceremonial, which led to the emergence of lecterns, candelabras, or acquamaniles in human form to mirror all the participants involved in the liturgy. In an inimitable manner, two marble figures of subdeacons standing on lions depicted on the pulpit at Salerno (ca. 1180) are holding the bookrest over their heads with arms raised in varying positions (fig. 5). The sculptor gave the figures differently raised arms and immortalized the heaviness of the book so anecdotally, giving the impression that the two are sustaining this position only with great effort during the reading. The first surviving example of \textit{Atzmänner} dates from the first half of the 13th century onwards, but the history of their origin might well reach back into the 12th century. Otto Schmitt expressed this idea as early as 1937. Unfortunately, it is not yet possible to reconstruct the liturgical function of the statues of the four sacred Virgins (Etheldreda, Sexburga, Ermenilda, and Werburga), which Brithnod, Abbot of Ely (d. 981), in southern England, had placed on either side of the altar of his monastery church. They were wooden figures covered with silver plate:

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

But let us return to the \textit{Atzmänner}, a term which can be substantiated from 1480 onwards as referring to lecterns in the shape of a subdeacon with me-

---

28 Erika Kirchner-Doberer: Die Deutschen Lettner bis 1300, PhD., University of Linz 1946, p. 210; Kirchner-Doberer refers to Durandus, L. IV. X c. XVI and c. XXIV.


Fig. 5: Pulpit with two sub-deacons holding a bookrest, ca. 1180. Salerno, Cathedral
Fig. 6: "Atzmann", ca. 1250.
Naumburg, Cathedral
ticulous attention to detail: alb, dalmatic, humeral veil, and maniple are depicted, as if the figures were teaching aids designating the liturgical vestments. Anja Lempges compiled 23 examples from the earliest example in the Naumburg Cathedral (fig. 6) up to the end of Late Gothic period.33 Besides Naumburg (here the chronological delineation is roughly retraced for the sake of brevity), the examples are located at Strasbourg (ca. 1250; Musée de l’Œuvre Notre-Dame, formerly in the cathedral), Fritzlar (13th century; Collegiate Church), Limburg an der Lahn (Diocesan Museum and Cathedral Treasury, originally at the Monastery of Marienhausen in the Rheingau), Sinnershausen (14th century; parish church), Heiligenstadt in the Eichsfeld (first half of the 14th century; St. Martin), Frankfurt (first half of the 15th century; Frankfurt Cathedral), Fritzlar (13th century; Collegiate Church), Limburg an der Lahn (Diocesan Museum and Cathedral Treasury, originally at the Monastery of Marienhausen in the Rheingau), Sinnershausen (14th century; parish church), Heiligenstadt in the Eichsfeld (first half of the 14th century; St. Martin), Frankfurt (first half of the 15th century; Frankfurt Cathedral), Frankfurt (ca. 1414; St. Leonhard’s Church), Korbach (early 15th century; parish Church of St. Kilian), Mainz (ca. 1500; Cathedral and Diocesan Museum, originally in the Monastery of St. Jacob), Bingen (ca. 1500; Collegiate Church), Würzburg, Workshop of Riemenschneider (beginning of the 16th century; Cathedral of St. Kilian) and in Ebersdorf by Hans Witten (ca. 1513; Collegiate Church of Chemnitz-Ebersdorf). The latter, as counterpart, still possesses a lectern in the form of an angel.34 As for the one in Ebersdorf, I would like to include two French bookrests in the form of angels, which have been overlooked in art historical research in this present context. The two mutilated but still salvageable angels were found among the debris of the once five-arched hall rood screen of Saint-Lazare Cathedral of Autun, built shortly after 1469 under Bishop Jean Rolin (1463–1483, son of the Burgundian Chancellor Nicolas Rolin).35

The depiction of liturgical actions by “silent assistants” even extends to the handwashing of the priest: In 1871, in the case of the demolition

34 Schmidt: Atzmann (see fn. 30), col. 1220–1223. Reinle: stellvertretendes Bildnis (see fn. 5), pp. 320 ff. Adolf Reinle: Die Ausstattung deutscher Kirchen im Mittelalter. Eine Einführung, Darmstadt 1988, pp. 49–55. Lempges: Schatz im Schutt (see fn. 32), pp. 262–269. The only known depiction of a small carved table bookrest, supported by four kneeling angels, is mentioned in the “Heiltums Büchlein” of Wittenberg. This bookrest also served as a reliquary for 123 particles; the Duke of Berry had a similar lectern, which was supported by two angels; see Lüdke: Statuetten I (see fn. 16), p. 106.
work in the former Monastery of Seligenstadt, a *piscina* (dated 1240/1250) was found in the form of a subdeacon with amice and alb, carrying a lavabo (h 106.5 cm, w 35 cm, d 43 cm). The lavabo has an all-round groove for lowering the cover. The figure is now in the Hessian State Museum in Darmstadt (fig. 7).\(^{36}\) Moritz Woelk, on the occasion of his inventory catalog, compiled a group of such figures, the oldest of which is the subdeacon of Seligenstadt followed by the examples of Saint-Pierre-Le-Jeune in Strasbourg (ca. 1300?), in the parish church of Saint-Hilaire at Marville near Montmédy (16\(^{th}\) century; Luxembourg), and in the church in Arrancy (16\(^{th}\) century; Luxembourg).\(^ {37}\)

The *Ordines* of that time provide detailed information as to when, how, and with which accompanying words, the handwashing was carried out during the Mass. Within the framework of the medieval liturgy, five washes can be distinguished: The celebrant washed his hands before the Mass, at the beginning of the Offertory, before the Canon, and/or after the Communion; the deacons and subdeacons washed their hands during the Offertory.\(^ {38}\) As early as the year 850, Leo IV (847–855) had obligated two handwashes to be binding: before the Mass and after the Communion. In the course of the High Middle Ages, the sanctity of the Eucharist played an ever-increasing role; a process that was further reinforced in the 13\(^{th}\) century by the doctrine of transubstantiation, during which bread and wine are transformed during the Mass into the body and blood of Christ. As a result, the Purity Order for the treatment of the host and the chalice was further elaborated upon. During the ritual, two hand washings were now required: After the Offertory, or preparation of the materials for the Eucharist, and after the Communion.\(^ {39}\)

In summary, if we look back on these multifaceted images of liturgical sources and sculptures discussed in this contribution, the following conclusion becomes evident: The Wolfram candelabra of Erfurt fits neatly into the period from 1150 to 1250, in which the sumptuous liturgy, its religious activities, and their respective actions were interpreted in detail to take shape


\(^{37}\) Woelk: Bildwerke Landesmuseum Darmstadt (see fn. 36), p. 94, with note 10.

\(^{38}\) For detailed description see Michael Hütt: “Quem lavat unda foris …”. Aquamanilien, Gebrauch und Form, Mainz 1993, pp. 83–103.

Fig. 7: Subdeacon with lavabo, ca. 1240/50. 
Darmstadt, Hessisches Landesmuseum: Inv. Pl 01:19
in proxy images.\textsuperscript{40} Adolf Reinle had already placed the Wolfram in this context in 1984, and here it was to remain.

I would like to thank my colleague, Heiko Hartmann, for the stimulating exchange of ideas on the occasion of this discussion.

At the time of printing this contribution, access to the unpublished dissertation about “Atzmänner” by Anja Lempges was denied as the publication date for the dissertation was announced for October 2017. See Anja Lempges: Der Atzmann. Form und Funktion eines mittelalterlichen Pultträgers, Regensburg 2017.

Translated by Patricia Smith

Photographic acknowledgements

Fig. 1: after Legner: Romanische Kunst in Deutschland (see fn. 3), fig. 296. Photo: Albert Hirmer, Irmgard Ernstmeier-Hirmer
Fig. 2: Legner: Romanische Kunst in Deutschland (see fn. 3), fig. 259. Photo: Albert Hirmer, Irmgard Ernstmeier-Hirmer
Fig. 3: after Hahnloser: Villard d’Honnecourt (see fn. 22), pl. 44. Photo: Bibliothèque nationale de France
Fig. 4: after Hahnloser: Villard d’Honnecourt (see fn. 22), pl. 13. Photo: Bibliothèque nationale de France
Fig. 5: after Poeschke: Die Skulptur des Mittelalters (see fn. 29), fig. 221. Photo: Albert Hirmer, Irmgard Ernstmeier-Hirmer
Fig. 6: after Stöppler: Diakon oder Atzmann (see fn. 33), p. 1320. Photo: Vereinigte Domstifter zu Merseburg, Naumburg und des Kollegiatstifts Zeitz
Fig. 7: after Woelk: Bildwerke (see fn. 36), p. 88. Photo: Sina Althöfer

\textsuperscript{40} For additional details see Hütt: Aquamanilien (see fn. 38), pp. 95–107.