

**Orationale (Prayerbook) for Easter**  
**In Latin and Middle Low German, illuminated manuscript on parchment**  
**Germany, Saxony, Cistercian convent of Medingen, c. 1480-1500**

218 leaves, vellum, modern foliation in pencil in the upper right corner on all rectos (1, 2, 3 ... 136, 136 bis, 137 ... 215, 216, 217), modern notes in pencil concerning the collation in the lower right corner of the first recto of each quire, mostly in quires of ten leaves, collation: i<sup>12</sup> (ff. 1-12), ii<sup>12</sup> lacking 11 (ff. 13-23), iii<sup>10</sup> (ff. 24-33), iv<sup>12</sup> lacking 5 and 10 (ff. 34-43), v<sup>10</sup> (ff. 44-53), vi<sup>12</sup> lacking 1 and 5 and 12 (ff. 54-62), vii<sup>10</sup> lacking 7 (ff. 63-71), viii<sup>12</sup> lacking 4 + one leaf (f. 77) after 6 (ff. 72-83), ix-x<sup>10</sup> (ff. 84-103), xi<sup>10</sup> lacking 4 (ff. 104-112), xii<sup>10</sup> lacking 4 (ff. 113-121), xiii-xiv<sup>10</sup> (ff. 122-136, 136 bis, 137-140), xv<sup>10</sup> lacking 4 (ff. 141-149), xvi-xx<sup>10</sup> (ff. 150-199), xxi<sup>12</sup> (ff. 200-211), xxii<sup>6</sup> (ff. 212-217), no loss of text; no catchwords, (remnants of) quire signatures still present in the lower inner corner of the first recto of some quires, e.g. "xvj" on f. 150r, "xvij" on f. 160r, "ix" (for ix) on f. 180r and "xxij" on f. 212r, written in a littera hybrida by two hands: Hand A ff. 1r-14v, 44r-v, 76r-78v and 159r-217r, Hand B ff. 15r-44r, 45r-75v and 79r-158v; text in brown, red, blue and green; ruled in pale brown ink, prickings for all horizontal en for the outer vertical lines still present in some leaves (e.g. ff. 13, 14, 23, 76 and 78), 1 column, justification: 110-103 x 81-75 mm.; 16-20 lines: 16 lines on ff. 15r-23v, 34r-43v, 45r-53v, 72r-75v and 79r-159v, 17 lines on ff. 24r-33v and 54r-71v, 18 lines on f. 44r-v, 19 lines on ff. 1v-12r, 76r-78v and 212r-217v, 20 lines on ff. 12v-14v and 160r-211v; ruling for music notation (not executed) on ff. 129r-v, 131r-v and 133r-v; one three-line historiated initial in gold, pink and blue with border decoration (f. 76r), three five-line decorated initials in gold, pink and blue with border decoration, four seven-, six- and five-line lombards in gold with pen-flourishes in purple and blue (ff. 8v, 76v, 180r, 193r), several five-, four-, three-, and two-line lombards in gold, red or blue with pen-flourishes in purple, red and blue, many four-, three-, two- and one-line lombards in gold, red or blue without pen-flourishes, majuscules in text stroked in red, rubrics in red, blue and green; 1 full-page miniature depicting the Resurrection, f. 77, a historiated initial with lower border on f. 76r, illuminated border on f. 212v, and an illuminated lower border of f. 213v, a contemporary protective gaze covering a decorated initial with burnished gold sewn onto f. 8v; in good condition, minor traces of use, some wear on f. 1r, the burnished gold of the initials on ff. 1v and 212v partly chipped. Sixteenth-century binding, brown leather over wooden boards, central panel stamps with ornamental motifs surrounded by roll-stamps with vegetative motifs, filets, four raised bands, two brass clamps and clasps on leather thongs, one clasp loose and kept separately, pastedowns of vellum maculature from a fourteenth-century manuscript in Latin with interlinear and marginal glosses. Rebacked. In modern box of brown linen over pasteboard. Dimensions 154 x 118 mm.

This is the partially published and long missing illuminated manuscript from the well-known scriptorium of the Cistercian convent Medingen. It contains an ensemble of unusual texts, many in the vernacular, and charming illuminations characteristic for the religious renewal, inspired by the Devotio Moderna, in the female convents on the Lüneburger Heath in the late fifteenth century. The text incorporates songs in Lower German, which once drew the attention of Hoffmann von Fallersleben, who published excerpts from this manuscript in 1857.

## PROVENANCE

1. The text and the illumination of the manuscript indicate that it was made in the scriptorium of the Cistercian nuns of Medingen, near Lüneburg, Saxony. Probably it was made for their own use; in any case, it was intended for use by a woman, since the text contains phrases like "Ego peccatrix indigna" (f. 52r).

2. In 1857 the manuscript was in a private collection in Hannover, as witnessed by the renowned German poet and philologist August Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben (1798-1874), who published excerpts from it in the periodical *Germania* ("Aus einer Pergamenthandschrift des 15. Jahrhunderts, 217 Blätter in Octav, im Privatbesitze in Hannover"). See the link where the manuscript is discussed: Henrike Lähnemann, "From Medingen to Michigan A Detective Story" (written for 'Der Heidewanderer' Colour Supplement to the Allgemeine Zeitung Uelzen 6 July 2013), translation Laura Ball, <http://www.staff.ncl.ac.uk/henrike.laehnemann/medingen/Heidewanderer-2013-07-06-engl.pdf>
3. The only traces of ownership in the manuscript itself are a slip of paper glued to the lower pastedown with the numbers 10 and 3 in modern handwriting, and the number 3 in pencil on the upper pastedown.

## TEXT

1. ff. 1v-14v, Prayers for Easter Saturday, rubric: "In sacratissima et gloriosissima vigilia Pasche ad matutinas cum primo evigilaveris", incipit: "Quid retribuam domino pro omnibus quae retribuit mihi. Sicut ovis ad occisionem ductus est", explicit: "Deus qui hac sacratissimam noctem et cetera"; incorporating two songs in Lower German:

f. 1v, "Help uns dat heyliger graf. dar god sulven inne lach, mit sinen wunden also heer. vroliken mote we varen to Jherusalem kyrileisum" (Lipphardt, *Kirchenlieder*, p. 180; Lipphardt, *Reimgedichte*, p. 78).

f. 2r-v, "Nu is de werlt alle to gode vele vro. wem te se christus geloset heft uth der helle mit sines sulves blode. dat was god sulven te gude. Kyrileisum" (Lipphardt, *Kirchenlieder*, p. 180; Lipphardt, *Reimgedichte*, p. 78).

2. ff. 15r-75v, Prayers for Easter Saturday, rubric: "In sacratissima et preclarissima et melliflua et auriflua vigilia pasche," incipit: "Que est celestis clangor. et iocunditas per lucidissima pascalis letitie", explicit: "Jhesus lux vera caritas immensa, bonitas inextinguibilis, vita interminabilis et ineffabilis"; incorporating prayers, songs and phrases in Lower German, among which:

f. 15r, rhymed, "Ik se de lenter tyt upghan. myn oghen schowen wne. Dar ik an den blomen gha. al myt blidem synne. myn herte vrowet sik yeghen der pasche wne" (Hoffmann von Fallersleben 1857, p. 164, after this manuscript; Lipphardt, *Kirchenlieder*, p. 182).

ff. 15r-16r, rhymed, "Nu wille wy keren ghans al unsen vlyt. An de vyl wnnichliken tyt. De dar paschen is ghenant. Aller tyde en ghulden bant [...] Se sprikt de voghele an. Dat se wol willen to kure ghan. Uppe dat se vulbringhen christi lof. Wante anden hemmelschen hof" (Hoffmann von Fallersleben 1857, pp. 164-165, after this manuscript).

f. 17r-v, rhymed, "Ik grote dessen hilghen sunnavent. De myt sunderker unde myt wnderker hillicheit is uth deme munde godes is beghavet [...] Ere morgen ro. bringhet uns den hertenleven paschedach grot. Des vroude unde werdicheit. Mote uns bringhen to der ewighen salicheit. Amen" (Hoffmann von Fallersleben 1857, p. 165, after this manuscript).

f. 35r-v, rhymed, "O du dure scat eddele balsmen vat Alleluia. Uthe dy is alle gnade vloten unde zothicheyt. Alle wischeit unde vroude is an dy besloten. Wente du bist uth der hilghen drevldicheyt ghesproten. Unde se is sulven an dy besloten. Dyn lof kan nement grunden. Dyk

vul loven konnen nene tunghen. Vor dem throne der ghotlyken almechticheit. Wordestu ghevunden. Dar dik de hemmelschen seyden so suthtelken klunghen. Unde den hilghen enghele so vroliken sunghen. Dar umme synghe ik myt herten unde mut munde. Nu yn desser vrolyken stunde" (Hoffmann von Fallersleben 1857, pp. 165-166, after this manuscript; Lipphardt, *Kirchenlieder*, p. 183; Lipphardt, *Reimgedichte*, p. 86).

ff. 38r-41r, rhymed, "Dar ynne sik bedeckede myt der wlkene der mynsheit de ware sunne. Uppe dat he de wolust unde wnne. Mochte hebben ynder mynschelken naturen. Dar he af spelende was er he schup alle creaturen [...] Nu lovet got myt my altolyke. Alle de creaturen dede sijn in hemmele unde yn ertryke. Unde were dat alle myne lede tunghen weren. De scholden hute secken eme to love unde to eren".

ff. 52r-53r, rhymed, "O spiritus paraclite o digitus dextere dei. Slut nu up den grindel cordis mei. Dat de koning des vredes sotelken dar ynne moghe delizieren. unde jubileren. Gif my hute in dessene benediden werden daghe. To ener zoten morghen gave [...] unde dat ic vullenkomen trost in aller not anime et corporis et precipue in hora mortis van eme entfanghen mote unde dat ik syner soten yeghenwardicheit ewichliken bruken mote Amen" (Lipphardt, *Reimgedichte*, pp. 81-82).

ff. 61v-64v, rhymed, "Wente us is worden unbekant. De wandelinghe godes vordere hant. Unde syne dodes bittergheit. Is uns keret in alzo grote zoticheit [...] Ik se dyne wnden schinen boven de clarheit der sunnen. In dyner ere unde in dynen groten wunnen. Dyn licham is lutterer wan dat rode gholt. Dar umme is myn vroude worden manichvolt" (Hoffmann von Fallersleben 1857, pp. 166-167, partly, after this manuscript).

f. 67v, rhymed, "O wnsame vrolike nacht. Du bist vorluchtet so se dach. Dyn missamme schin. de mote verluchten mynes herten schrin [...] Den herten leven zoten pasche dach. Des myn herte unde myn sele so langhe begheret hat" (Lipphardt, *Reimgedichte*, p. 87).

ff. 68v-69r, rhymed, "Willekome sistu vrolike oster dach. Willekome uterwelde sunne dach. Du bist aller daghe ere. Unde alles yares en vrolik here [...] Des helpe de sulve mylde gude got. de dik van anbeghinne uterwelet hat. unde boven alle daghe hoghet hat" (Lipphardt, *Reimgedichte*, p. 88).

3. ff. 76r-158v, Prayers for Easter Sunday, rubric: "In splendidissimo ortu deliciosissime rutilantissime et excellentissime Paschalis diei in quo verus sol Christus Jhesus vita vivens celum et terra rutilo splendore ac novo gaudio iocundissime resurrectionis illustravit [...]", incipit: "Ecce dies oritur in cuius ortu aureo sol verus oritus que ultra non moritur", explicit: "Expliciunt oraciones festive. Necnon gloriose et divine. De quibus gratiarum fluunt vene. Omnium deliciarum habundancijs plene. Tibi decus et imperium. Tibi laus tibi gloria. Tibi gratiarum actio. Per infinita seculorum secula [...] ut in futuro mereantur te eternaliter in gloria contemplare. Amen. Amen"; incorporating prayers, songs and phrases in Lower German, among which:

ff. 113r-114v, rhymed, "Set up unde vrowet uik an dessen vyf sloten dar alle wnne barmherticheit unde gude is uthe vloten. Set dat ik desse wuden vyve. Beholden hebbe in mynen undotliken lyve. Dar ane scol gy merken unde weten. Dat ic uwer nummermer kan vorgheten [...] Unde de frucht des levendes de ik hute hebbe dregghen. De wil ik gy vor gheves gheven Alle der uterwelden myn. De des van my begherende syn. Dat uns dit allen sche des helpe uns de vadir unde de sone unde de hilghe gheit. [sic] Amen".

f. 122r, rhymed, "Grotet sistu uterwelde osterdach. Deme nen dach liken mach. Du bist wuniclik unde clar. Du bist zote altomal. Du bist de wolschinende carbunkel. Den nen nacht kan verdunckeren. Du bist en wnsam paradys. Unde aldes jares ere unde pris. Du bist de wolluchtende ametiste. De dar schinet boven alle lichte" (Hoffmann von Fallersleben 1857, pp. 167, after this manuscript).

f. 123r-v, rhymed, "O here paschedach wes ghegrotet myt hundert dusentvolder grote. Dik en konnet nicht to vullenkomen loven alle tunghen. Wente dyn lof unde ere is van gode uthe sprunghen [...] Du bist myn sunne unde ok myn dach. du bist der waren vroude en clar speigel glas. O mynnichlike dach bringe us an den hemmelchen palas. Dar wy vroliken moghen scowen Ihesum den ewighen dach amen" (Hoffmann von Fallersleben 1857, p. 167, partly, after this manuscript; Lipphardt, *Reimgedichte*, p. 91).

4. ff. 159r-209r, Prayers for Easter Monday, rubric: "Introduxit enim dies plena beatitudine", incipit: "Hec est dies preclarissiam quam astat proxima illi nobilissime diei", explicit: "Pro quo tibi sit laus et gloria per infinita secula. Amen" (ff. 209v-211v blank).

5. ff. 212r, Easter prayer, rubric: "In sacratissimi et preclarissima die pasce Oracio", incipit: "Salve dies sanctitatis leticie et felicitatis", explicit: "et gaudium cum sanctis tuis sine fine mansurum Amen".

6. ff. 212v-213v (rubric on f. 212r), Easter prayer, to be read during Mass, in Lower German interspersed with Latin phrases, rubric: "Memoria infra missam dulcis lectabilis inter graduale. Hec dies quam", incipit: "Hec dies Id is en wyse in scho wan te groten vorsten ende vorstinnen dantzet so hebben se sick to malen bequemelken unde duchtighen ens gat se vor wart ene achter wort vake detender", explicit: "Dut is en dach boven alle dage. Deo gracias. Alleluia".

7. ff. 213v-217r, Easter prayer, in Lower German, interspersed with Latin phrases, rubric: "Pius completorium dulcis meo", incipit: "Hic est dies magnus. Id is wol eyn wyse in der werlde dat me den groten mechtighen heren unde eddelen vorsten plecht na tho luchtende", explicit: "Hec est dies quem fecit dominus exultemus et letemur in ea numquam are pereant sum in perpetuum tecum gaudeant. Amen" (f. 217v blank).

The manuscript described here was made in the Cistercian convent of Medingen near Lüneburg, in Saxony. The convent's origins go back to 1228, when a monk called Johannes and four nuns formed a religious community in Restorf am Hühbeck. Later on they settled in Altenmedingen, where the first buildings were consecrated in 1241, and finally in the village of Zellensen, today's Medingen. The new church was consecrated in 1336. Most of the convent buildings were destroyed in a fire in 1781. The ruins were demolished and the convent was re-built in an early neoclassic style. Today the convent is a residence for women of the Protestant Lutheran faith.

From 1479 onwards, the convent of Medingen was reformed under the influence of the *Devotio Moderna*. The Cistercian order, which had not been followed very strictly anymore, was re-established and the old monastic injunction "ora et labora" (pray and work) was put into new practice. A scriptorium became one of the focal points of the convent which seems to have given occupation to more than a dozen nuns. Between 1479, when the convent was reformed, and the Lutheran Reformation, the nuns of Medingen created their own unique type of prayerbooks. This manuscript contains prayers for the Easter Vigil (Holy Saturday), and Easter, with the unique mixture of Latin and vernacular texts characteristic of many of the manuscripts

copied by the nuns at Medingen that expand the Latin liturgy with vernacular prayers, songs originating in lay circles, and meditations. Manuscripts such as this one were copied both for the use of the nuns themselves, and for noblewomen in neighboring towns.

## ILLUSTRATION

f. 77r, full-page miniature, depicting the Resurrection of Christ, with Christ stepping out of the tomb, holding a crozier with banner, flanked by two angels playing a violin and a lute, two soldiers (one kneeling, the other sleeping) at His feet, in the background the three Marys on their way to the grave, and two deer, minor border decoration;

f. 76r, historiated initial, depicting a man, half-length, holding a scroll extending to the left and lower border reading "Also heylich is desse dach dat en neyn man to vullen lonen mach sunder te heylige go", with border decoration;

f. 212v, decorated initial with illuminated border decoration incorporating a king and a saint, both half-length, on flowerheads, the king (David?) with a shield and holding a scroll reading "Constituite diem sollempnem in condensis" (Psalm 117:27: Appoint a solemn day, with shady boughs), the saint with a chalice and holding a scroll reading "Beati qui ad cenam agni nuptiarum vocati sunt" (Blessed are those who are called to the wedding feast of the Lamb);

f. 213v, decorated initial with illuminated border decoration incorporating a man, half-length, on a flowerhead holding a scroll reading "Ergo die ista exultemus qua nobis viam vite" (Therefore let us rejoice on this day on which for us the way of life [...]).

The manuscript's illumination is in a sense deceptive: the naive style suggests a date of origin much earlier than the actual one. Henrike Lähnemann aptly speaks of a "retro-style" and argues that the nuns of Medingen applied it deliberately to pinpoint their orthodoxy in theological matters. One should bear in mind, however, that Medingen, in the north of Germany, was quite remote from the innovative artistic centers in late medieval Europe, and that the rustic character of Medingen manuscript illumination is not significantly different from other styles in the Lüneburg region and in neighboring areas. Lähnemann also points out that at Medingen individual nuns were responsible for the entire production of a tailor-made manuscript, from the choice of hymns and meditations through to the final rubrication and illumination. This may account for the startling range of artistic accomplishment, ranging from crude pencil-drawings to elaborate highly finished illuminations.

Medingen manuscript illumination can be divided into two periods. The naive yet charming style of the only full-page miniature in this manuscript, showing the Resurrection, is typical for the first period (c. 1480-1500). Among the features characteristic for Medingen manuscripts from c. 1480-1500 are the choice of texts, the style of the decoration, the striking use of different colours for the script, the type of ruling, and the application of protective gaze. The miniature is drawn rather than painted. The representation has been only partly filled in with colors, of which the dominant ones are green, red and lilac. The miniature reminds one of early German woodcuts and engravings from printmakers like the Master of the Berlin Passion and the Master of the Martyrdom of the Ten Thousand, and it, in fact, may have been copied after a print, which we have not been able to identify.

Henrike Lähnemann lists 44 manuscripts from Medingen, now in public collections in Germany, Denmark, England, and the USA. To this number our manuscript can now be added. Very close in appearance to our manuscript is Hannover, Niedersächsische Landesbibliothek, Ms. I 74 (see,



for example, [http://www.manuscripta-mediaevalia.de/hs/katalogseiten/HSK0235\\_a066\\_JPG.htm](http://www.manuscripta-mediaevalia.de/hs/katalogseiten/HSK0235_a066_JPG.htm)). There are also striking similarities with Hamburg, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. in scrin. 209, which was written for (and possibly also by) the nun Elisabeth Elebeke (see, for example, Lähnemann 2013, fig. 8).

## LITERATURE

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## ONLINE RESOURCES

Website on Medingen manuscripts, with exhaustive bibliography, by Henrike Lähnemann:  
[http://research.ncl.ac.uk/medingen/public\\_extern](http://research.ncl.ac.uk/medingen/public_extern)

A fully digitized Medingen manuscript in Harvard Houghton Library:  
<http://pds.lib.harvard.edu/pds/view/10470924>

Website of the present-day convent Medingen:  
<http://www.kloster-medingen.de>

Census of German-language texts in medieval manuscripts:  
<http://www.handschriftencensus.de>

Repertorium of manuscripts illuminated by women in religious communities of the Middle Ages:  
<http://www.agfem-art.com>

On Lähnemann's publications  
<http://www.staff.ncl.ac.uk/henrike.laehnemann/medingen.htm>

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