

Vatican

Biblioteca Apostolica

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De ordine ac positione stellarum in signis (in the Aachen Compilation of 809-812 / *Libri computi*)

St Denis
859

text

- ff. 91r-99v *De ordine ac positione stellarum in signis* (in the Aachen compilation of 809-812 / *Libri computi*, a.k.a. the 'Compilation of 810 in 7 books')
- fol. 90r-91r EXCERPTUM DE ASTROLOGIA. Duo sunt extremi vertices mundi quos appellant polos septentrionis et austri – effisionem urnae aquarii que ad ipsum decurrit accipiens. (*Excerptum de Astrologia Arati*, cf. Maass 1898, pp. 309-12)
- fol. 91r-v DE ORDINE AC POSITIONE STELLARUM IN SIGNIS. Est quidem hic ordo et positio – Sed quia iuxta aratum numerus stellarum unicuique signo adscriptus est, eo quod ab ipso est ordine digesta descriptio proferatur. (cf. Maass 1898, p. 312)
- fol. 91v Helice arcturis maior habet stellas in capite septem, in singulis umeris singulas, in armo i, in pectore i, in pede primo claras duas, in summa cauda claram unam ... (cf. Maass 1898, p. 312).
- fol. 99r Anticanis habet stellas. iii.

As with the other compilation manuscripts, other related texts in the manuscript include:

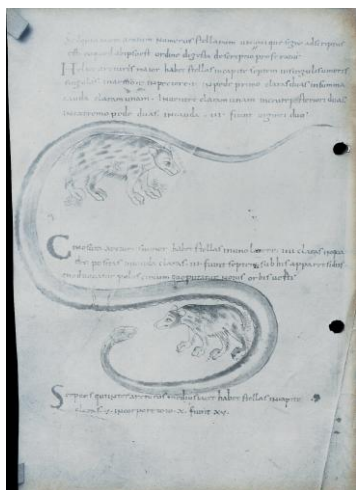
- ff. 1v-156v *De tempore ratione et de rerum natura* (excerpts from Bede and other authors)
- ff. 99v- 101v extracts from Pliny, *Naturalis historia*
- ff. 105v-107r extracts from Macrobius, *Commentarius in somnium Scipionis*
- ff. 107r-107v extracts from Martianus Capella, *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*

illustrations

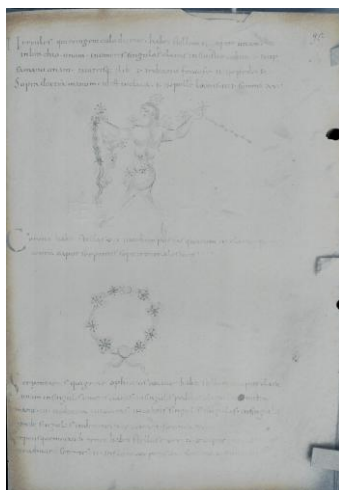
ff. 91v-99r 44 drawings in light brown pen with green and brown wash of the constellations; the stars are marked by circlets with 6 or 7 rays coming out of them and dots at the end of each line or sometimes between the lines

ff. 130r-136r calendar with zodiac signs in brown ink with brown wash at top

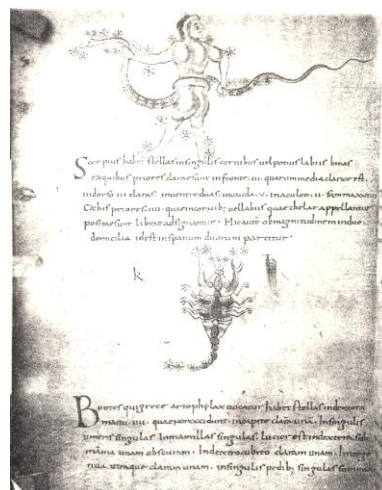
- fol. 130r Pisces tied at mouth and set vertically on page
- fol. 231r Aries walking to left with a frilly waistband
- fol. 132r Taurus as a half-bull with tapering end tucked under body
- fol. 133r Gemini as two warriors with arms round shoulders and holding spears
- fol. 134r Cancer as a crab with head towards the bottom of the page
- fol. 135r Leo walking to left with tail raised with stars marked in exactly the same places as in the stellar catalogue (fol. 94r)



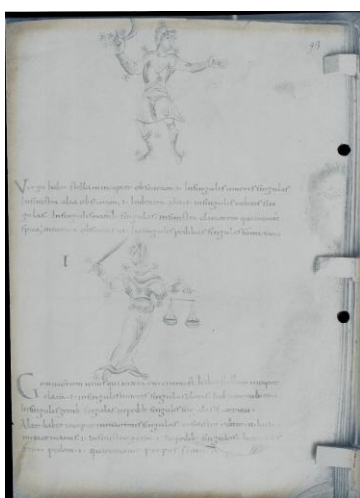
fol. 91v



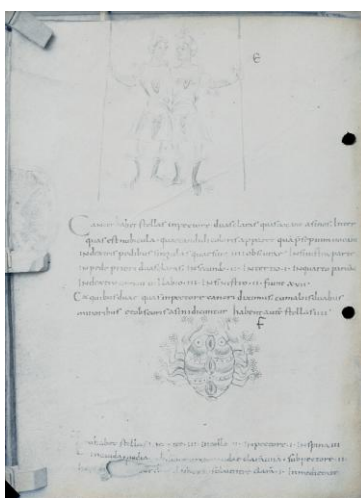
fol. 92r



fol. 92v



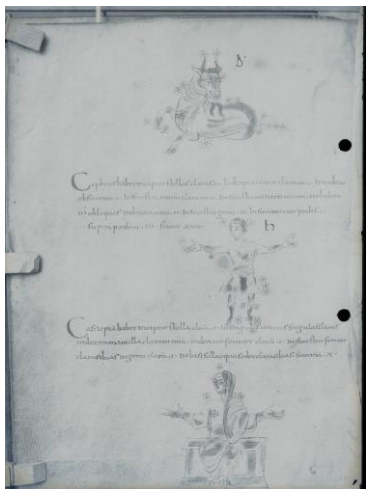
fol. 93r



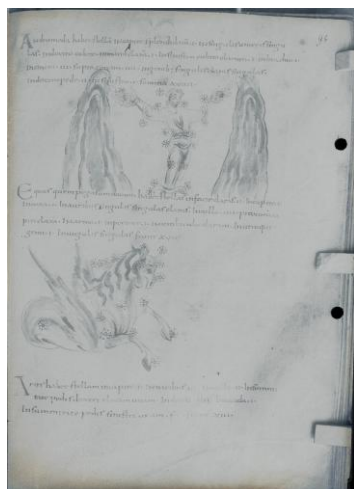
fol. 93v



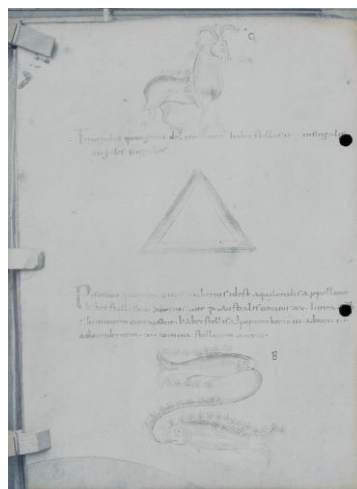
fol. 94r



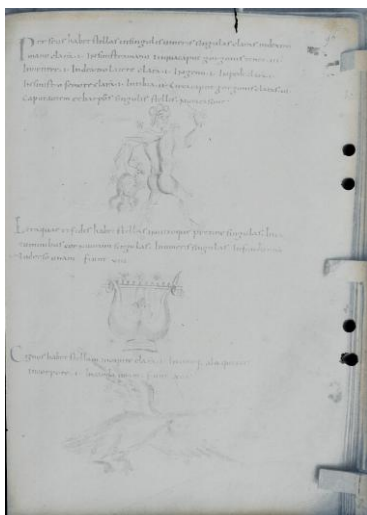
fol. 94v



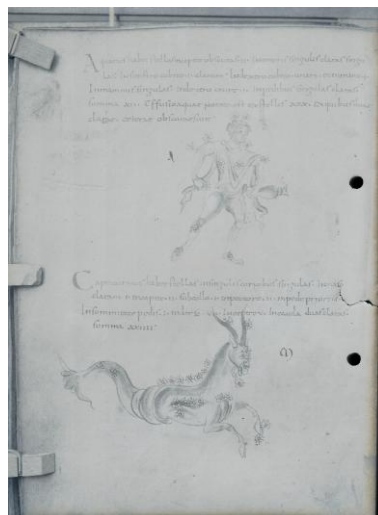
fol. 95r



fol. 95v



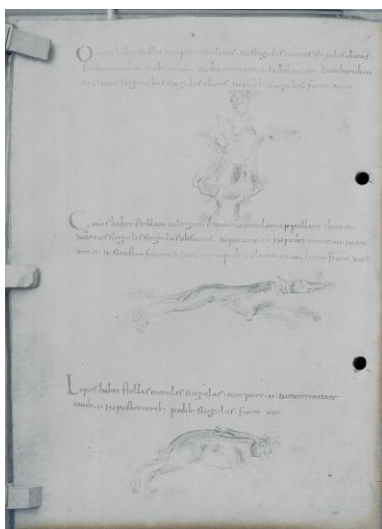
fol. 96r



fol. 96v



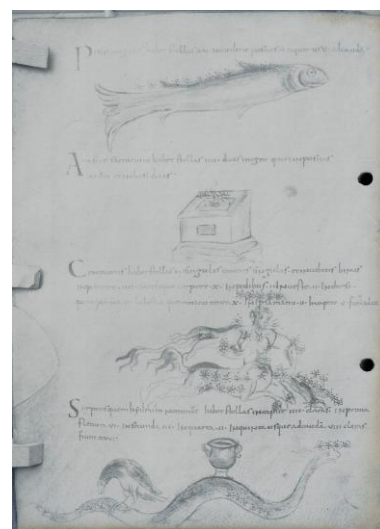
fol. 97r



fol. 97v



fol. 98r



fol. 98v



fol. 99r

fol. 91v **DRACO INTER ARCTOS** with **DRACO** as a small headed snake whose body makes a long, sinuous, S-shape, with the larger loop at the top and its head near the bottom of the page; it turns its head inwards to face the smaller bear; both bears tucked neatly within the bends and face in opposite directions (top right and bottom left) and both backs are towards the top; no stars are marked in **DRACO**

URSA MAIOR is the larger bear and stands in profile to the right; it has a relatively long tail, lumpy feet and is very furry; it has 7 stars in the head, 2 in the feet, 5 in the body, 3 in the rump, 1 in the tail, 2 in the back leg and 2 in the back foot (22 stars)

URSA MINOR stands to the left and has all the same physical attributes as the other bear; its nose nearly touching **DRACO'S**; it has 4 stars in the body and 3 in the tail (7 in all)

fol. 92r **HERCULES** is nude and walks to left with lower body in profile and upper back facing viewer; the lion skin is draped over his left forearm, which is held out in front of him; he carries thin stick behind him in outstretched right hand with its tip lowered; he has 1 star in his head, 2 in his shoulder, 1 in his wrist, 1 in his hand, 1 in his elbow, 4 on his hips, 1 in his foot and 5 on his lion skin (16 stars)

CORONA BOREALIS is a circlet of flowery stars with ribbons at bottom, with 8 stars marked

fol. 92v: **OPHIUCHUS (SERPENTARIUS)** faces away from the viewer and walks to left with his right leg leading; but he looks backwards over his shoulder to the right; his left arm is extended in front of him and his right arm is bent at 90°; the **SERPENS** is held flat and wound round his waist once; it faces away from the man; in **OPHIUCHUS**, there is 1 star in his head, 2 in his shoulders, 3 in his left hand, 3 in his legs and 2 in his feet (11 stars); the Snake has 8 stars in his head, 9 in his body, 6 in his tail and 4 above his tail (27 stars)

SCORPIO is placed vertically on the page with its head towards the top; it has a segmented body and ; its front claws have two pincers and are held in front of his face; he has an oval mouth with three hairs coming from it; there are the, three-toed legs on each side of the body; there are 4 stars in his claws, 3 in his mouth, 4 in his body, 7 in his segments and 2 at the tip of his tail (20 stars)

fol. 93r **BOOTES** faces the viewer and is dressed in a short, tight tunic with loose boots; he holds a sickle-shaped sword (?) in his upraised right hand and his left arm held is outstretched to the right with the open palm upwards; he looks to the side to the right; he has 1 star in his head, 1 in each shoulder, 3 in his chest, 1 in his elbow, 4 in his hand, 1 between his legs and 1 in each foot (14 stars)

VIRGO faces the viewer and leans towards the right; she and wears a long, tight dress that falls to her ankles and her head is covered; she holding the **SCALES** at waist height in her left hand and holds a feather-like palm frond in her upraised right hand; she looks at the palm; she has 1 star in her head, 1 in each shoulder, 6 on her waist, 1 on each elbow, 3 in her left hand, 2 in her right hand and 1 on each foot (18 stars)

fol. 93v **GEMINI** face the viewer and are two youths dressed in short, tight tunics without cloaks and calf-length boots; they stand with their arms around each other's shoulders, look at each other and hold spears in their outer hands; the left Twin has 1 star in his head, 2 in his shoulders, 1 in his elbow, 2 in his knees and 2 in his feet (8 stars); the right Twin has 1 in his head, 2 in his chest, 2 on his left arm, 1 in his left hand, 1 on his left leg and 3 on his feet (10 stars)

CANCER has a striped oval, segmented body; arm-like claws with two pincers are held in front of him and there are four legs with three toes each on either side; he has round eyes and a circular (fish) mouth from which four hairs sprout; it has 5 stars in its claws, 2 on its back, 4 in his left claws and 6 in his right claws (17 stars)

fol. 94r **LEO** stands to the right and has slightly hunched shoulders; he has a wild mane and his tail is lifted, ending in three tufts; he has 3 stars in his head, 2 in his neck, 1 in his chest, 6 in his middle, 3 in his front legs, 1 in his back leg and 2 in his tail (18 stars)

AURIGA stands in boat-shaped *biga* running to right, dressed in a tight tunic; he holds with a flail with two thongs in raised his right hand and holds the reins held in his left hand front of him in; both the horse have their mouths open and long manes; there are no goats (but note the two stars near the loop in the reins held in his left hand); he has 1 star in his head, 3 in his right hand, 1 in his shoulder, and 2 in his left hand (7 stars)

fol. 94v **TAURUS** is depicted as half a bull lying down to the left, but with his head turned back to the right; his body has a tapering end that is ticked under his hind flank; he raises and curves his right foreleg and extends the left one; he has lyre-shaped horn; there are 2 stars in his horns, 2 in his head, 1 in his nose, 2 in his neck, 3 in his back, 1 in his chest, 3 in his feet, 1 on his belly and 6 on his flank (21 stars)

CEPHEUS stands facing the viewer with arms outstretched straight from his shoulders with his palms facing upwards; he wears a short tunic and no cape; he has no attributes and is marked with 2 stars in his head, 1 on each hand, 1 on his

elbow, 1 on his chest, 5 in his skirt, 2 on his legs and 4 on his feet (17 stars)

CASSIOPEIA faces the viewer and is seated on a square, boxy seat without a back; she is dressed in a loose tunic with a mantle covering her head and she has her arms outstretched to the sides with her palms upwards; she has 1 star in her head, 2 in her shoulders, 1 in her chest, 4 in her lap and 2 on her throne (10 stars)

fol. 95r **ANDROMEDA** faces the viewer and wears a long, tight dress that is gathered at her hips and the bottom hem flares out (**note:** the bottom of her hem makes a shape that could be misinterpreted as a snake or dragon at her feet by later illustrators); the outer sleeves are full and the inner ones tight; she stands slightly to the right and has her arms raised at her shoulders with her wrists chained to the top of two piles of rocks; she has 1 star in her head, 2 in her shoulders, 2 in her hands, 2 in her elbow, 7 at her waist, 2 in her knees and 3 on her feet (19 stars)

PEGASUS is winged and faces to the right with a tapering tail tucked under its hind-quarters; it has a red eye and a red mouth, which is open; he has a very full mane, his bent forelegs are stretched in front and the open wing appear to sprout from his belly, just behind his front knees; he has 2 stars in its ears, 4 in the head, 4 in the mane, 3 in the body, 2 on the knees, 2 on the hooves, 1 in the tail (18 stars)

fol. 95v **ARIES** walks to the right with his left foreleg leading; he wears a lacy band at his waist and has outward curving horns; he has 1 star in its head, 1 in the nose, 2 in the neck, 2 in front of his nose, 4 on his back, 2 in his feet and 1 on his tail (13 stars)

TRIANGULUS is equilateral and has 3 stars marked

PISCES swim in opposite directions (top right and bottom left) and both their backs face upwards; they are joined at mouths by a cord; the top fish has 12 stars, the bottom fish has 15 stars and the cord has 9 stars (36 stars)

fol. 96r **PERSEUS** faces away from the viewer (buttocks visible) and strides to the right with his right leg leading; he is nude, save the cloak which flutters out behind him; he holds the Medusa head behind him at buttock-height by her hair and he holds a straight sword upraised in his right hand; he has 2 stars in his shoulders, 1 in his right hand, 3 in his left hand, 3 on his waist, 1 on his knee, 2 on his shin, 1 on his foot and 3 in the Medusa head (16 stars)

LYRA is like a lyre with the 'horn' side-supports curling around the top bar of the instrument; there is a trefoil decoration amidst the strings and pegs visible; it has 9 stars marked

CYGNUS flies to the right with its neck and wings outstretched and the feet tucked under; it has 1 star in the head, 5 in the upper wing, 5 in the bottom wing, 1 in the body and 1 in the tail (13 stars)

fol. 96v **AQUARIUS** stands towards the viewer, lunging to the right with his left leg bent; he is nude save his cloak, that makes a V-fold across his chest and one end of which he holds in his lowered right hand; his right hand is also lowered and he holds a handle-less urn horizontally, which pours the water towards his left thigh; he has 2 stars in his head, 1 in his neck, 1 in his shoulder, 2 in his elbows, 2 in his chest, 1 in

his right hand, 1 in his right leg and 1 in each foot (11 stars - there are no stars in the water)

CAPRICORN faces to the right and has his bent forelegs extended in front of him; he has straight horns, pointed ears, a small pointed beard and a smiling face; he has a triple corkscrew tail that ends in for lobes with tendrils to the side; he has 2 stars in its horns, 3 in the face, 1 on the chin, 7 on the back, 2 in the chest, 5 on the belly, 2 in the foot and 2 on the tail (24 stars)

fol. 97r **SAGITTARIUS** drawn as centaur, rushing to right and holding bow in front of his in his left hand and pulling the string with his right; he has no attributes; he has 2 stars in his head, 1 in his hand, 1 in his elbow, 2 in his arrow, 4 in his body, 1 in his leg, 1 on his hoof and 1 in his tail (13 stars)

AQUILA has its wings spread above its shoulders and its head turned to the left; it stands on **SAGITTA**, the tip of which points to the right); there are 4 stars in Aquila and 4 in the arrow (8 stars)

DELPHINUS is a long fish that swims to the right and has a very long, slightly curved horn on head (almost like a lantern fish); there are with 2 stars in his horn, 1 in his nose, 4 in his body and 2 in his tail (9 stars)

fol. 97v **ORION** stands facing the viewer, slightly to the right; he has no attributes and wears a calf-length tunic with a cloak that is caught in a circular clasp at his right shoulder and falls in front of his chest in a V-shape; he holds his left hand extended in front of him at chest height and then he holds his right hand in front of his chest; he has 3 stars in his head, 2 in his shoulders, 1 in his elbow, 1 in his right hand, 3 in his left hand, 3 in his skirt, 2 in his knees and 2 on his feet (17 stars)

CANIS MAIOR bounds to the right; he is a sleek greyhound with a pointed nose and long pointed ears that it holds against its head; he wears a thick studded collar and has a long straight tail; he has 1 star in his tongue, 2 in his back, 2 on his belly, 2 on his chest, 3 on his forefeet, 1 on his rump, 1 on his back foot and 3 in his tail (15 stars)

LEPUS also bounds to the right and has long ears held back against his head; it has 2 stars in his head, 2 in his body, 1 on his tail and 2 in his feet (7 stars)

fol. 98r **ARGO (NAVIS)** is depicted as half a ship (though it could be construed as a full ship) with a triple-pronged front half and each of the prongs ending in a circle; the mast has rigging splayed like a triangle; curved stern is topped with dog's/ dragon's head and one steering oar is behind the ship; there is stylised water beneath it; there are 9 stars on the rail and 5 along the hull-line (14 stars)

CETUS faces to the right and is like a soft crocodile with front flippers held in front of its body; it has a very long snout; and a circular eye; it has a double corkscrew tail that ends in a fan; it has 6 stars in its belly and 7 in his tail (13 stars)

ERIDANUS (FLUVIUS/HERIDANUS) is nude and is seated slightly above a stream which pours from the handle-less urn held sideways in his right hand; he holds a fish in his left hand and has long hair, as well as two wisps of hair that curl upwards

like horns; there are 9 stars visible in his water

fol. 98v **PISCIS AUSTRINUS** is a long slim fish facing to the right, with 12 stars marked.

ARA is a square altar set on a stepped base on a ground-line; there is a single flame on top and there are 4 stars marked

CENTAURUS is a centaur that rushes to the right with all four feet off the ground; his animal skin cloak seems to be made from a lion skin and the feet and tail are visible; he holds a dog (**LUPUS**) by its hind legs in his left hand in front of his forelegs; there are 5 stars above his head, 2 in shoulders, 2 in chest, 4 in belly, 3 in elbow, 2 on the animal skin, 2 in elbow, 2 in hand, 10 in body, 2 in his hooves and 10 in his breast (45 stars)

HYDRA is a snake that has a small head and moves to the right; his body has two humps and has 4 stars in his head, a sequence of 6, then 3, the 2 in his body and 8 in his tail (23 stars)

CRATER is 2-handled, footed cup on **HYDRA'S** first hump; no stars marked

CORVUS faces backwards on **HYDRA'S** last hump and is pecking on it; no stars marked

fol. 99r **CORVUS**² is depicted standing to the right with his wings closed; he has 1 star in the head, 2 in the wings, 2 in the tail and 2 in the feet (7 stars)

CRATER² is a two-handled deep cup with 2 stars on the rim, 3 in the body and 2 in the feet (7 stars)

CANIS MINOR (ANTICANIS) stands to right with its left front paw raised; it has a long pointed snout and ears that are held back and a long tail; there are 3 stars marked along its back

notes

According to BORST (1995²) this manuscript is a copy of the *Libri computi* (ff. 2v-120v), also known as the Compilation in 7 books originally created between 809-812 in Aachen.

PELLEGRIN (1978) points out that the manuscript is mid-9th century, except for ff. 1 and 157-157v, which are from 12th century and ff. 37-58 from 13th century, with 14th- and 15th-century additions; painted at St Denis by Ingelhard

The arrangement of the compilation is the same as Vat lat 645. See VIELLARD-TROKOUROFF 1966 for comparison study with Paris BN lat 12117.

The cycle of illustrations in this manuscript has all the characteristics of the cycle *De ordine IV*.

bibliography

MONTFAUCON 1739, I, p. 25.

BERGER 1879, pp. 261-95.

WAITZ 1881 (MGHS), XIII, pp. 718-21.

MANUTIUS 1898, pp. 393-8.

SAXL 1915, I, pp. 59-66: says 10th century, lists contents, says part of same group with Vat lat 643 (*sic.* = probably meaning Vat lat 645) and Munich 210.; also fig. 3, pl. X.

SAXL and **PANOFSKY** 1933, pp. 237-38: 9th century, previously in St Denis; Carolingian manuscript derived from later antique prototypes with Hercules with a club and a lion's skin.

NEUSS 1941, p. 115

LAISTNER and **KING** 1943, pp. 144,151 and 155.

WILLMOTT 1945, pp. 160-74.

BYVANCK 1949, no 86.

VIEILLARD-TROIEKOUROFF 1966, pp. 77-80 and 87-104.

KING 1969, p. 49-51.

MANCINELLI 1969, p. 134 and figs 8-9.

BOSCHEN 1972, p. 17.

QUINTO CENTENARIO ... BAV 1975, p.80, no. 209: end 9th century; in elegant Carolingian minuscule; some illus's added later.

PELLEGRIN 1978, III, 1ère partie, pp. 59-61: parchment; French, probably St Denis (13th century was in the Abbey from an inscription on fol. 2r); regular handwriting

MCGURK 1981, p. 321.

LeBOURDELLÈS 1985, p. 101.

BORST 1995 ², p. 162, note 95.

HAFFNER 1997, p. 176: says 'de ordine ac positione'.

BETHMANN , XII, p. 273 ff. *Pertz Archiv*,

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 Spring 1987
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