A. Proposed Study

1. Working Title

Das Bildwerk der Renaissanceeinbände der Historischen Bibliothek Quedlinburg - Eine ikonografische Studie.

*The Cover Artwork of the Renaissance books held in the Historic Library of Quedlinburg – An iconographic study.*

2. A “substantial and original contribution to scholarship”.

Today the Historic Library of the Municipal Museums of Quedlinburg (Saxony-Anhalt, Germany) holds a collection of approximately 35,000 books from different eras, covering a variety of topics and fields of interest. The Library itself was formed by the 1833 amalgamation of the former *Stiftsbibliothek* (established in 1686 by the abbess Anna Dorothea, Duchess of Saxony-Weimar [1684-1704]) and the *Gymnasialbibliothek* (established in the 17th century), which was subsequently combined with the *Rathsbibliothek* (established in 1662). In the years to follow manuscripts (8th–17th century) and writings from the Historic Library were transferred to Berlin (1852) and to the University Library of Halle/Germany (1938).

The current library contains an exceptional number of valuable volumes and books that are representative of the former significance of the three institutions which have contributed to the present collection. The Quedlinburg convent and its canonesses, for example, were not only of noble birth and therefore members of wealthy families; they also had great political and clerical influence and contacts to the royal court intermittently over several centuries. The *Gymnasium*, a fusion of the former Latin schools of the St. Nikolai church and the Benedictine church in Quedlinburg, on the other hand, was founded in 1540 following the introduction of the Reformation. The Reformers Martin Luther (1483-1546) and Philipp Melanchthon (1497-1560) were even consulted during its establishment.

The third part of the Quedlinburg library came from the so-called *Rathsbibliothek*, which in its first years represented the book

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2 Documentation of the most significant evidence of their political influence that in 997 the first abbess Mathilde was proclaimed the imperial vicar when her nephew the emperor Otto III went to Rome. In the 15th century a different demonstration of power occurred when the women’s convent and the town of Quedlinburg came into conflict over the town protectorate which was held by the bishop of Halberstadt. The Abbess Hedwig wanted to take over the protectorate herself. In 1477 Hedwig finally gained victory and the town had to give up all its previous rights and liberties. Cf. Schlenker, Gerlinde, *Abtissin Mathilde – eine Quedlinburgerin als Reichsverweserin vor 1000 Jahren*, Halle/S. 1999, p. 18, 29; Schlenker, Gerlinde, Schellbach, Artur, Junghans, Wolfram, *Auf den Spuren der Wettiner in Sachsen-Anhalt*, Halle/S. 1998, p. 168.

collection donated by the lawyer Johann Hübner. In 1825 this library mainly held books covering juridical, historical or political subjects.  

My research will focus on the 16th century German book-covers in the holdings of the Historic Library of Quedlinburg and on putting them into their iconographic and social context within the 16th century. I seek to discover, through the method of iconography, whether the illustrations depicted on the German book-bindings of the Historic Library of Quedlinburg represent only a religious commitment to the 16th century Reformation movement as is generally accepted in most publications on German book-covers, or if they are also characterised by educational purposes as is suggested of paintings from the Reformation period. In my thesis I intend to analyse the images and composition of the book-covers in order to reconstruct the meaning of the imagery they contain and any changes that might be detectable in these contexts over time.

Until now the book-covers of the Quedlinburg Historic Library have not been properly examined or discussed in (academic) papers and as a result have not been put into their iconographic, social or historical context within the 16th century. Consequently, no comparative analyses have been conducted, either diachronically or in relation to other European countries. The only minor exploration to date was conducted by me in preparation for an exhibition on the treasures of the Historic Library in 2007. Therefore, during the course of my research I will look at the Quedlinburg region but will also follow up questions that scholars in the field of the study of book-bindings have not yet examined. The specific research and analysis of the Quedlinburg Renaissance book-covers will also be an empirical study that has not been done before. Furthermore I will continue my original piece of work as the object-oriented study of these book-covers and especially of their imagery will contribute to the understanding of Renaissance book-covers in general and their iconographical meaning in particular. It will also provide an awareness of the artists who created them and the people who purchased them, as well as their social, historical and cultural context.

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9 Some of the examples in the Historic Library show the work of well-known masters of this time, while others represent the work of as yet unknown craftsmen. To name a few known: Master NP on a binding by Petrus Betz...
pictorial contexts within the 16th century and with regard to Quedlinburg. Moreover the iconographic analysis and interpretation of the Quedlinburg book-bindings may provide information on such historical phenomena as the perception of religious developments, the shifts and conflicts within the church and society caused by the Reformation. It can also provide an insight into the status of the aristocracy, the contemporary bibliophiles, the emerging bourgeoisie, as well as the position of canonesses at this time. Therefore it will help to understand the era much better and how this might be reflected in the realm of visual culture.10

B. Research Direction

1. The specific aims of the project

The overall aim of my research is an object-oriented iconographic analysis of the Renaissance book-covers of the Historic Library of Quedlinburg in order to provide an explanation of their various styles and compositions, the reasons that led to changes in designs, their consequent meaning, and whether or how the renaissance book-covers represent the issues of their time. I particularly want to examine how they relate to the general situation of German art of the 16th century and the appreciation of German Renaissance book-bindings. Therefore my proposed study is aimed at situating one particular class of imagery into its relevant historical and contemporary relationships.

The Quedlinburg Historic Library holds approximately one hundred book-bindings from the 16th century. The few book-covers I have already been able to examine showed portraits of Reformers11, biblical scenes12, portraits of German rulers13, as well as virtues14. I particularly want to analyse to what extent they can be related to the new theology espoused by Martin Luther, specifically their purpose as instruments of education.

The late 15th and early 16th centuries are characterised by a range of social, economic, political, and theological developments.15 The most significant theological event at this time was the Reformation, which caused the iconoclasm and in the end resulted in new religious confessions. It is important to know that Luther did not condemn the use of illustrations; however he did declare them bad or good, depending on their usage. In his opinion it was wrong to adore images, to turn them into objects of idolatry, but made a distinction if they were to be used as a way to educate people in the new faith – his new theology. Yet Luther did not create any guidelines for Lutheran art, only suggesting the use of certain images (including the Passion of Christ, the Last Supper, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, and the most

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10 See also the publication of Chadwick, who describes not only the transformation of monastic libraries into municipal libraries, but also the need for books as learning material. Chadwick, Owen, The Early Reformation on the Continent, Oxford/New York 2001, p. 4, 7-8, 167, 173-174.
11 such as Martin Luther and Philipp Melanchthon
12 the crucifixion, the resurrection, Jacob’s dream etc.
13 such as the Electors of Saxony
14 In that case meant are the four Cardinal virtues (Justitia, Fortitudo, Sapientia, Temperantia) and the three Christian virtues (Fides, Caritas, Spes).
important the Lutheran theme of *Law and Gospel* or prohibiting others (such as the depiction of the Saints or Mary in ostentatious clothing). Nevertheless in general publications on German art of the 16th century, book-covers are rarely discussed in the process of understanding and explaining this time. One of the few exceptions is to be found in the 1983 catalogue “Kunst der Reformation”\(^7\). In this document Konrad von Rabenau gives a comprehensive summary of the “Einbandkunst in der Reformationszeit”\(^8\), its depictions\(^9\) and paragons. Although Rabenau lists all the major iconographic book-binding topics, such as portraits of the reformers, he omits an interpretation of the meaning of the Lutheran artwork. In his 1994 publication on the book-covers of the Renaissance he then argues – like other researchers in this field – that the images represent a “Bekenntnis zur Reformation”\(^20\), as does Heimo Reinitzer in his book about the Lutheran pictorial theme of *Law and Gospel*. In a brief paragraph he classifies the imagery of book-covers into the category of *Bekenntnisbilder*.\(^21\) Bonnie Noble, on the other hand, argues in her book about Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472-1553; whose work served as a model for book-cover images) that, for example, „by including portraits of religious and political leaders [...] Cranach’s Lutheran paintings memorialized illustrious members of the community as paragons of explicitly Lutheran salvation“\(^22\).

I hypothesise that this should also be considered for the Luther portraits on book-covers. To examine this hypothesis, I will consider the question as to whether portraits of the Reformers and supporters of the Reformation movement such as the Electors of Saxony depicted on book-bindings only represent an endorsement of the new Faith, as is generally accepted in the study of book-covers, or whether they also serve a memorial function. I also hypothesise that depictions showing Lutheran art-themes on book-covers not only reflect a commitment to the new theology but also serve the purpose of educating people (the readers of the books) in the new faith and its meaning.

Most of the other writers who publish on the Renaissance or Reformation period, including Margaret Aston\(^23\), Martin Warnke\(^24\), Katharina Krause\(^25\), Andreas Tönnesmann\(^26\), Jeffrey Chipps Smith\(^27\) or Rolf Toman\(^28\) to name but a few, largely

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\(^{19}\) These depictions include humanistic themes like the ‘Judgement of Paris’, religious (Lutheran) themes like scenes from the Passion of Christ, portraits of owners or personalities of this time. Cf. Rabenau, Berlin 1983, p. 345-346.


\(^{22}\) Noble, Lanham a. o. 2009, p. 11.

\(^{23}\) Aston, Margaret, The Renaissance Complete, London 1996.


\(^{26}\) Tönnesmann, Andreas, Die Kunst der Renaissance, München 2007.

\(^{27}\) Smith, Jeffrey Chipps, The Northern Renaissance, London 2004.

concentrate on paintings, graphics, sculptures, or architecture. It seems, therefore, that book-covers are still a minor subject with an inferior influence on the interpretation of this time period. They seem simply to have gone unnoticed in the research field of Renaissance or Reformation art, culture and social life. This fact is surprising, if one takes Goldschmidt’s argument from 1967 into account that a systematic research on book-cover decorations could lead not only to former owners, but could also give important information on the holdings of Abbey- or University libraries in the 16th century. The results of these studies could then also offer a better understanding of palaeography and early printed works.29 I will therefore argue that the examination of book-bindings provides a clearer perception of the society of the 16th century, the lives of individuals at that time, their attitudes towards religious and political matters, and the representation of their status. In this context I will follow Veit Propst who maintains „Vom Einband sollte weniger auf den Inhalt als vielmehr auf den Eigentümer geschlossen werden.“30 Manfred Bachmann claims that the complex variety in the design of book-covers shows the owners’ interest in the events of the time, as well as „die individuellen Ansprüche des Auftraggebers“.31 Consequently, it can be assumed that the bindings are a personal and social statement.32

Overall, the majority of publications on book-covers so far are restricted to a presentation and discussion of certain library holdings, book exhibitions, or the collections of bibliophiles without further pursuing academic research questions, theories, or debates. Their aim is mostly the documentation and description of the existing book-covers as objects. The description is mostly limited to the condition of the cover, the binding material, the binding and stamp tools, the provenance, the biographical or the historical notes, the identification of artists and the figures or the personalies depicted or simply the shown themes in general. An interpretation of the meaning of these images is usually missing or is condensed to a religious position, a sign of individualism, or an image cultivated by the owner. Even prominent examples of the visual arts, like the art works of Lukas Cranach the Elder, Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), Hans Holbein the Younger (1497-1543), Urs Graf (ca. 1485-1529) etc., are usually only named rather than being subjected to a visual or written comparison: an issue I wish to address with my thesis.33

I argue that German Renaissance book-covers not only provide valuable information on social and religious contexts, but at the same time represent the purpose of educating people in Luther’s new theology. What, then, is the deeper meaning of German book-covers from the 16th century? Are they merely trivial pieces of art, reflections of religious affiliation, or educational instruments? How do German book-

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bindings relate to the overall collection of German Reformation art? How are historic and social events of the 16th century represented or reflected upon in the Renaissance book-covers of the Historic Library? A further question concerns the book-bindings of the Quedlinburg Historic Library and how they fit into the understanding of German book-covers of the 16th century.

These research aims can, however, only adequately be addressed when the dearth of knowledge regarding the social and historical context of the respective book-covers of the Historic Library within the 16th century is addressed. At this point it is difficult to make any specific assumptions concerning this subject as all three libraries were founded in the 17th century. Therefore it remains to be clarified from inventory lists and other archival material whether the books had already come into the possession of the women’s convent during the 16th century, along with the foundation of the library, or even later. It also needs to be specified as to whether there are any 16th century bindings covering the books from the former Rath- and Gymnasiaalbibliothek. Until then, no theories should be put forward that address the social or historical context of certain images depicted on the bindings is to be found within 16th century society. However I do assume that part of the abbey library came through heredity or donations made by family members of the abbesses, such as the Electors of Saxony and Palatinate, into the library’s possession.34 I argue, too, that certain portraits or works by particular artists represented in the collection reflect these family relations.35 Another explanation for those book-bindings which depict Saxon rulers or their heraldic devices is the Saxon stewardship over the convent.36 I suggest that some 16th century books became part of the Stiftsbibliothek through this relation. In contrast the Gymnasiaalbibliothek served the purpose of educating children. Hence it seems unlikely the council of Quedlinburg would have wasted money on precious book-covers. However it is crucial to remember that the Gymnasium came into being as the amalgamation of the Latin schools of the St. Nikolai and the Benedictine churches. It is therefore possible that books representing bindings from both religious institutions came into the possession of the newly-founded school or in later years even through donations as considered for the Stiftsbibliothek.37

36 The abbess Hedwig (1458-1511) assigned her brothers Elector Ernst of Saxony (1464-1486) and Duke Albrecht of Saxony (1464-1500) with the hereditary stewardship over the Quedlinburg convent on the 16th of March 1479. Albrecht later received the complete stewardship, which remained with the Albertine line until 1697. Cf. Schlenker, Schellbach, Junghans, Halle/S. 1998, p. 168; Weschke, Schneider, n. p. 2003, p. 15.
2. The methods to be used.

The methods involved in my thesis are:

- **iconography** to describe and analyse used images
- **iconology** to explain the meaning of used images
- **social history** to determine the economic and cultural context

In preparation for this analytical work I will also

- *survey* and *document the book-binding* material (primary source)
- *photograph* and *trace the book-bindings* for the purpose of documentation and comparison
- *survey the existing literature* and pictorial material for comparative studies (secondary sources)
- *critically examine the sources* (book-covers) in order to deduce the provenance, the age, the ownership, and the purpose of the bindings
- *review the archival materials* to clarify more specific provenance and former owners of the books

These methods will be described in greater detail below:

The interpretation of book-covers must follow the research methods used in the field of art history because of the significant imagery, symbols and structure of the pictures. Throughout all art periods, images and the way they are presented have expressed a deeper meaning and are therefore important keys to the understanding of the use of certain portraits and/or figures at certain times, as well as within a social and historical context. Therefore it seems strange that such an elementary and crucial methodology as iconography, the purpose of which is the identification and description of images, has largely not been recognised in publications about research methods into book-binding and its artwork. 38 To redress this fault, I will need to focus closely on this area.

The same applies for the method of iconology, which also remains unconsidered in existing publications on book-binding research, and which is most important for the analysis and explanation of the images used. Iconology is the methodology which interprets those cultural, social, and historical circumstances at the time of origin of the research material which might have influenced the way certain images were represented, or might reveal the reason why they were used. The work of art becomes a "**Dokument seiner Zeit**" 39 which shows the development of society in a specific era in its pictures. 40 In my research these "documents of their time" are represented by the 16th century book-bindings of the Quedlinburg Historic Library and their possible social or cultural purpose and meaning.

Iconography and iconology are fundamental for the understanding, interpretation, and explanation of the pictures on the book-covers and their meanings, in order to be able to put them in the correct historical, cultural and social context.

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In my research I will follow the three steps of iconography examination:

- The pre-iconographic characterisation which will give an overview of the objects, figures, and situations presented in the picture.
- The naming of the subject. This includes a comparison with other examples of the same theme, the identification of the figures depicted according to the symbols and attributes that are represented, as well as the use of sources such as literature (e.g. the Bible) or other tableaus.
- The identification of the deeper, symbolic, or secondary meanings of the images and which ideas underlie the process of the design.

Following these steps I will start with a pre-iconographic characterisation, which will give an overview of the objects, figures and situation presented in the picture, and will also be part of the documentation. In the next step I will name the subject. This includes a comparison with other examples of the same subject, the identification of the figures depicted via their symbols and attributes, as well as the survey of sources such as literature (e.g. Bible) or other images (e.g. the ‘Judgment of Paris’ by Lucas Cranach, which is known to have served as a model for illustration on book-covers). Thirdly, I wish to identify the deeper, symbolic, or secondary meanings of the presentation and which ideas underlie the design. Rabenau, for instance, suggests the “Bekenntnis zur Reformation” and refers to the portraits of Martin Luther on book-bindings.

Another method not employed by leading researchers in the study of book-binding, but which needs to be considered, is the social history of art. It should not be underestimated, as it involves reflecting on an economic and cultural context rather than a one-sided view of the artist. It has been argued in older as well as more recent publications on book-bindings that the Reformation-movement had a great impact on the decoration of book-covers, particularly in the region of Middle Germany. The Reformation influenced contemporary society in many ways (including its economy and culture). For this reason the book-bindings and their images need to be analysed with the help of the method of social history of art.

In preparation of my major analytical work I must use several other methods to distinguish relevant book-binding material. My first step will be the survey of the 16th century book-covers of the Historic Library which will follow specific limiting criteria: a time frame from 1500 to 1600, the actual presence of book-covers on the books of this period, and German bindings only. The documentation will be organised in the form of a database and will include specific data about the book (author, book-title, ...

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42 Other important paragons were Albrecht Dürer, Hans Holbein or Urs Graf. Cf. Mazal, Wiesbaden 1997, p. 188; Rabenau, Brussel 1994, n. p.
45 Cf. Arnold, Dana, Art History: Contemporary Perspectives on Method, Singapore 2010, p. 5.
year, place of print) and, apart from the images (photography and tracing), any significant information on the book-cover itself (year, initials, images etc.).

After the careful selection of the data collected, I will study and analyse the material according to criteria of the field of research into book-bindings. Otto Mazal and Hellmuth Helwig regard the collection of the reproductions of other book-covers from the same time period (in my case the 16th century) as an essential resource from which to evaluate, identify, and interpret their own research material. To do that I need to survey existing literature discussing the images on (and the artists who created them) book-bindings and the available pictorial material in order to collect appropriate reference material for the purpose of picture comparison. The replicas of other book-covers could be tracing paper rubbings of the originals, compilations, catalogues of exhibitions, library or museum guides, as well as papers and articles.

In the last few years another possibility has emerged to help compare book-covers: the internet. There is at least one main project focused on the online documentation of book-covers from the Gothic and Renaissance periods, and a diverse range of other libraries which present their collections on the web.

Another essential method applied is the criticism of sources. Although Mazal and Helwig critique the wrong dating of material due to the misinterpretation of information on and in the book itself, they do not name this specific method. This I see as a gap in the methodology of book-bindings, as the Quedlinburg book-covers are not only the subject of my study, they are also my main sources, which need to be critically examined in order to deduce provenance, age, ownership, and the purpose of the bindings (gift, donation, purchase, legacy). As a consequence the verification of the book-bindings as well as the inside of the book is vital. In order to identify previous owners, the intention of the bindings and their place of origin other than that identified by the place where they were printed, I will search for inscriptions and initials in the book as well as on the book-cover. The years engraved in the cover images provide information on the year of the stamp production, but not on what time the book was actually bound. Therefore I need to verify the year of print on the title page in order to narrow down the possible year of binding which, as a logical consequence, can only have happened after the printing of the book. As my explanation demonstrates, an accurate source criticism is essential for the detection of important information which will help to put my research material in the correct context.

The research on archival materials – also not recognised in the study of book-binding – is important in terms of searching for further information on previous owners and

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54 If there is no year of print on the title page, I will look up the book on an online database such as the catalogue of the University Library of Halle in order to establish the year of print.
their possible connection to the women’s convent, town council, or school; the purchase of books through the three former institutions which now form the Historic Library; the entry of the books into the holdings of the same; and, if procurable, the determination of the purpose of the book purchase. The corresponding archival materials are inventory lists of the Stiftsbibliothek, Rathsbibliothek and Gymnasium from the 16th century onwards, registers of births and deaths, deeds of donation and transfer, written correspondence, placing of orders etc. The primary aim will be to ascertain the (exact) year of the respective book-acquisitions in order to formulate more hypotheses on the social-historical context of the three institutions within the 16th century.

In conclusion, I will use common methods of research into book-binding (photography, tracing and comparison), as well as so far less common research instruments yet in this field such as the criticism of sources, the survey and documentation of book-binding material, the survey of relevant literature and the examination of archival materials. All these methods are essential for the categorisation and understanding of the Quedlinburg book-covers. Even more crucial and substantial for a successful analysis, interpretation and correct classification of the research material in the social and historical context of the 16th century are the likewise unrecognised methodologies of iconography, iconology and social history. With their use I hope to demonstrate the importance of these working methods in this field of research.