

PREFACE

This book started as a contribution to the research project *The Individual in the European Cultural Tradition*, supported by the Norwegian Research Council, of which I was the leader during the years 1992–1995. The original plan was to make a comparative analysis of the representation of individual persons in four historiographical traditions, the Old Norse, the German, the Byzantine, and the Italian, from the early Middle Ages to the Renaissance. This eventually turned out to be too a vast project, while on the other hand, I found the exclusive focus on the individual too narrow. The small selection of German historical writings eventually turned into the present book. However, my work on German historiography started earlier, as an attempt to understand the Old Norse sagas against a general European background. Thus, unlike most earlier scholars within the field of German historiography, I have not been trained as a medievalist by reading the texts that form the subject of the present book. This may no doubt have its disadvantages. I hope, however, that such an “outsider’s view” may also give some new insight, and that I shall be able to pass on to the reader some of my bewilderment but also fascination with what is probably the most important historiographical tradition of Western Europe before the middle of the Twelfth Century.

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Needless to say, I am myself fully responsible for all shortcomings. I am also grateful to George Drennan for revising my English and to Renate Lunde for preparing the index, and to the Norwegian Research Council and the University of Bergen for financial support. Finally, I want to thank Professor Robert J. Bast for accepting the book in his series and for his encouragement and efficiency when dealing with the manuscript.

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