

**The Divorce of King Lothar and Queen Theutberga. Hincmar of Rheims's »De divortio«.** Translated and annotated by Rachel Stone and Charles West, Manchester (Manchester University Press) 2016, XVI–351 p., 3 b/w fig. (Manchester Medieval Sources), ISBN 978-0-7190-8296-2, GBP 19,99.

rezensiert von | compte rendu rédigé par  
**Rosamund McKitterick, Cambridge**

The entry for 860 in »Annales Sancti Bertiniani«, written by Prudentius, bishop of Troyes, is blunt about the events that precipitated the »De divortio« of Hincmar of Rheims. In Jinty Nelson's translation the entry reads: »Lothar hated his queen, Theutberga, with irreconcilable loathing, and after wearing her down with many acts of hostility, he finally forced her to confess that she had had sodomite intercourse with her brother Hubert. For this crime she was immediately condemned to penance and shut away in a convent.«

Hincmar himself had been approached for expert advice by a group of Lotharingian clerics and laymen at an early stage of the crisis in 860. They sent him two separate sets of questions, six months apart and Hincmar's responses were composed in two stages that same year. The affair prompted consideration of the status of Theutberga's confession, Christian marriage, divorce, adultery, and remarriage; abortion; the validity of ordeals; sexual deviance, incest, sorcery and witchcraft; who can judge a king, kingship; the workings of law and justice, oaths, penance and confession, appropriate punishment and correction. Hincmar offered a dossier of his own opinions on all these, bolstered with supporting references to the Bible, canon law, saints' lives, historical narratives, patristic theology and exegesis. With the intervention of Pope Nicholas I in 863, however, Hincmar's careful assembly of precedents, judgements, explanations and exposition of points to consider, as well as his conclusion that only a general assembly and judgement by laymen could declare the marriage invalid and that Lothar should do public penance for his own sin, became redundant. This excessively long-winded, convoluted, verbose, pompous, but endlessly fascinating instance of a learned scholar puzzling through a contemporary problem on the basis of his legal and biblical knowledge appears not to have been widely circulated or cited. The »De divortio« survives in a single manuscript, now Paris BnF lat. 2866, all the more important because it appears to be Hincmar's own copy. It is not an autograph: six Rheims scribes had the task of copying it out, and there are indications that other copies once existed, presumably made for the men who commissioned Hincmar's opinion in the first place. Yet this manuscript also contains many annotations and additions (also included in the translation) apparently made by Hincmar himself, and these offer his second thoughts on the problem.

Stone and West's translation is based on the excellent [MGH edition](#) published by Letha Böhringer in 1992. The translators fully acknowledge her work, especially her identification of Hincmar's sources, and her reconstruction of how the text was put together and its stages of redaction. Since Böhringer's edition of course the treatise has been



Herausgegeben vom Deutschen  
Historischen Institut Paris | publiée  
par l'Institut historique allemand



Publiziert unter | publiée sous  
[CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/)

available to scholars, but this translation will make it possible to demonstrate to undergraduates and graduate students the kind of arsenal on which a Carolingian scholar could draw in considering the practical, moral and legal implications of a Carolingian *cause célèbre*. The usefulness of the translation is greatly extended with the comprehensive and precise introduction and analysis of the political context of the case of Lothar and Hincmar's composition and the helpful annotations added throughout the text. Stone and West are robust and scrupulous in considering the divorce case from the standpoint of the 9<sup>th</sup>-century protagonists and suggest that the »personal« element should not be underestimated for »it was precisely the way that royal bodies combined both personal and public concern that made kings and their consorts different from their subjects«. This excellent translation complements the volume of essays Stone and West edited: [Hincmar of Rheims. Life and Work, Manchester 2015](#).

The text is generally well presented but the map is printed so dark and small that the few place names thereon are barely legible. Similarly the »genealogy« is printed in very small type. One wonders why Manchester University Press did not simply reuse the map and table in the 2015 »Hincmar« volume.

Overall, fellow historians will appreciate the expertise, clarity and good sense with which Stone and West have approached both the text and the elucidation of its context. It is admirably abreast of current scholarship (not least that since 1992) on Frankish politics, the Frankish church, bishops, canon law, patristic and early medieval commentaries and use of Latin. This book, in short, is a valuable contribution to scholarship.



Herausgegeben vom Deutschen  
Historischen Institut Paris | publiée  
par l'Institut historique allemand



Publiziert unter | publiée sous  
[CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)