Hugo Stehkämper, Carl Dietmar, Köln im Hochmittelalter. 1074/75–1288, Köln (Greven Verlag) 2016, 549 p., 122 Abb., 1 Kt. (Geschichte der Stadt Köln, 3), ISBN 978-3-7743-0442-0, EUR 60,00.

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This third of a long-projected 13-volume history of Cologne is the product of many hands and minds over more than two decades of production. In 1995 the newly founded Historische Gesellschaft Köln appointed Hugo Stehkämper, recently retired from an eminent career as director of the Historisches Archiv der Stadt Köln (1969–1994), to be founding editor of the new »Geschichte der Stadt Köln« series. As such Hugo Stehkämper recruited university historians from Cologne, Bonn, Düsseldorf, Strasbourg (now Tours), Dresden, and Berlin to write twelve of the volumes, and when he retired from the editorship in 2007 at age 78 he was still working on this third volume himself (the other medieval volumes being »Band 2: Köln im Mittelalter« assigned to Karl Ubl, and »Band 4: Köln im Spätmittelalter« assigned to Wolfgang Herborn).

At his death on 22 June 2010, Hugo Stehkämper left behind an unedited and unfinished nine-chapter manuscript of some 900 pages. The Historische Gesellschaft leadership decided that, given the challenges of restarting the volume with a new author after Hugo Stekhkämper had held the role for some 16 years, someone should be contracted to edit and complete the manuscript to honor his legacy among the society’s members. After casting about for some time, current series editor (and author of its splendid first volume) Werner Eck enlisted Carl Dietmar, longtime journalist at the »Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger« newspaper (1990–2014) and an author skilled at distilling scholarly research into very popular handbooks of Cologne’s civic history and archaeology like »Kleine illustrierte Geschichte der Stadt Köln« (1996), »Das mittelalterliche Köln. Der historische Stadtführer« (2003), and with Marcus Trier both »Mit der U-Bahn in die Römerzeit« (2005), and »Colonia. Stadt der Franken« (2011). Recipient of the Kölner LiteraturPreis (2005) for his contributions to Cologne’s history »in zahlreichen, sorgfältig recherchierten und nicht dem Kölner Trend zur reinen Selbstbelobigung verfallenden Zeitungsartikeln und Büchern«, Dietmar was just the person to transform Stehkämper’s sprawling manuscript from inchoate Fachbuch to finished Sachbuch.

Eck makes clear in his foreword that the Historische Gesellschaft believed that »die Ergebnisse der breit angelegten Untersuchungen [Stehkämpers] der Öffentlichkeit und insbesondere den Mitgliedern der Historischen Gesellschaft zugänglich gemacht werden konnten«, and so Carl Dietmar’s remit was to produce »eine sachlich solide, flüssig geschriebene und für das historisch interessierte Publikum leicht zugängliche Darstellung des hochmittelalterlichen Köln«. In order to accomplish this, Carl
Dietmar had to heavily reduce and redact the manuscript in order to make it conform to the length and readability requirements prescribed by the Historische Gesellschaft. Furthermore, in spite of the vast size of the original manuscript, there were still two chapters lacking (11 and 12) in order to cover the vast majority of the critical 13th century (1216–1288), and given the Gesellschaft’s architectural interests it was decided to add a third and concluding chapter on the vast 13th-century church, cloister, and cathedral building projects, which Hugo Stehkämper had not planned. Indeed, Carl Dietmar wound up having to abridge and rewrite the Stehkämper chapters so extensively, as well as write three substantial chapters of his own, that his title was rightly changed from editor to joint author.

The resulting volume’s length, even with three new chapters, has been reduced from some 900 pages to a still hefty 443 with Carl Dietmar’s authorial voice of necessity presiding over the Stehkämper content contributions and thematic framework. Where the latter’s surviving imprint remains most pronounced therefore is in the framing of the volume itself. The book begins with the oft-discussed rioting of the merchant elite against an overbearing Archbishop Anno II in 1074, and reaches the teleological endpoint of its narrative arc in the Cologners’ victory over Archbishop Siegfried in the Battle of Worringen in 1288, thus assuring a leitmotiv of burgher yearnings for personal freedom and communal liberty from aristocratic and ecclesiastical lordship. More about this framing motif, which ran throughout Hugo Stehkämper’s own scholarship, in a moment but suffice it to say here that the intended reading audiences for the volume will find this local civics lesson very affirming, and they are encouraged to anticipate it from the outset by Dietmar’s introductory declaration: »Das Hochmittelalter ist schon immer als die wichtigste Phase der Verfassungsentwicklung und als ein erster Höhepunkt der Stadtentwicklung Kölns angesehen worden. Es ist in der Tat ein Stück spannender Stadtgeschichte, die hier nachgezeichnet wird.«

Hugo Stehkämper’s first nine chapters are reduced to their essentials: the first four provide the political narrative from 1074 to 1215, in which the emerging commercial elites join with the archiepiscopal ministeriales to administer the city’s legal, commercial, and financial affairs in collaboration with their archbishops who were quite often absentee lords on the emperor’s business during the course of the 12th century (chapters 1 through 3). This theme is then followed by the Staufer-Welf imperial Thronstreit era (1198–1215) which drastically altered the relationships between emperor, archbishop, and civic community such that the city under the leadership of its increasingly exclusive patrician elite were drawn into the Rhineland power vacuum to become political players in their own right as a legal corporation with the ability to turn commercial allies like the English into political allies through its vast wealth (chapters 3 and 4). The narrative then gives way to stand-alone analytical chapters on the development of the city’s districts (chapter 5), social classes (chapter 6), and the centralized municipal government’s constitution (chapter 7). The Stehkämper manuscript section then end with two chapters on economic developments (chapter 8) and religious life in parishes and convents (chapter 9). In all this the Cologne citizens are remarkably able and self-confident, both in commercial as well as political
and administrative matters, and therefore chafe increasingly against archiepiscopal interventions into the running of the city, which they had for so long mortgaged out to the patrician elites. It is clear by 1215 that the burghers led by the Geschlechter families had come to understand themselves as integral agents in the governance of their city. The substance of these chapters was drawn from the many lengthy articles Hugo Stehkämper published, most of which were reprinted in »Köln – und darüber hinaus. Ausgewählte Abhandlungen«, which was produced to honor him on his 75th birthday and which gave him the unprecedented opportunity to re-enter his prior publications with corrections and new commentary responding to those who had published works since these articles had first appeared. So there is little new scholarship to inform his manuscript chapters beyond his few remaining publications after that year. Hugo Stehkämper’s deep knowledge of the primary source records, developed over many decades of close archival research and manuscript study, remains the hallmark of his section of the volume.

Carl Dietmar’s chapters 10 and 11 return to the political/constitutional narrative and carry it through the years 1216–1288. During this period increasing jurisdictional conflicts emerged between civic leaders and archbishops once the latter became keen on recovering their direct administrative and legal authority over the city, and these disputes were in turn punctuated by increasing internecine feuds within the patrician elite itself which shrewd archbishops exploited to their short-term advantage.

Carl Dietmar employs the Große Schied of 1258 and subsequent Revolution von oben as the caesura to divide chapters ten and eleven, the latter of which reaches its dénouement in the Battle of Worringen.

For these two chapters Carl Dietmar was wise to rely on the work and advice of Manfred Groten (emeritus director of the Abteilung für Rheinische Landesgeschichte des Instituts für Geschichtswissenschaft der Universität Bonn from 1999 to 2015 and former Cologne city archivist), whose masterful volume »Köln im 13. Jahrhundert. Gesellschaftlicher Wandel und Verfassungsentwicklung«1 had already analyzed this critical century quite effectively. The final chapter on Cologne’s 13th-century architectural transition from Romanesque to Gothic is extremely thorough, well-informed, and uses the latest scholarship, though it reads more like a listing of properties than a reflection on the cultural and religious import of this monumental and costly body of artistic and spiritual expression.

Both, Carl Dietmar’s editing of the Stehkämper manuscript as well the insertion of his own voice and writing style, have given the text an accessible coherence and readability consonant with the intended public readership. Though the volume’s hybrid creation is reflected in the inevitable stand-alone quality of each chapter, the reader will find the overarching themes comprehensible. Hugo Stehkämper’s sometimes unnecessarily turgid academic prose has been ironed out, and at various points of

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scholarly debate Carl Dietmar judiciously presents alternative interpretations on equal footing rather than preserve Stehkämper’s sometimes partisan tone on the issues. A good example of this can be found at the book’s conclusion, where – although citing Hugo Stehkämper’s assertion that the Battle of Worringen »bildet einen der bedeutendsten Einschnitte in der Geschichte Norwesteuropas« – Carl Dietmar instead offers a more measured conclusion that the great military victory over the archbishop’s army in 1288 did not in fact unleash a constitutional revolution in the political life of northwest Europe emanating from Cologne as its bastion of bourgeois self-governance. Instead, Carl Dietmar recognizes: »Ein voller Rechtsausgleich zwischen Stadt und Erzbischof kam niemals zustande. Bis zum Untergang des kurkölnischen Staates und der Reichsstadt Köln am Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts hat es zwischen beiden keinen, wie es Wikbold 1302 ausdrückte, ›ruhigen Frieden‹ gegeben. Erst die revolutionären Veränderungen als Folge der französischen Besetzung des Rheinlands haben den Zwiespalt aufgelöst. Der Streit war obsolet geworden.« This assessment is more historically accurate than the celebration of a bourgeois revolution in 1288. In the peace settlement reached in the aftermath of the Battle of Worringen only the city’s noble military allies (the dukes and counts of Brabant, Berg, Mark, and Jülich) obtained archiepiscopal recognition of their status as legally free and sovereign territorial lords (Landesherren) and thus no longer his vassals. Cologne and its citizens, however, were pointedly and simply reminded of their place under the archbishop’s lordship. And when the Cologners hesitated to submit to a papal tribunal’s demands for payment of several thousand marks in recognition of their damage to their lord’s property and authority, the city was placed under interdict for a decade. Indeed, it was not until 1475 that the German monarchs felt it wise to fully acknowledge Cologne as a free imperial city, and there is ample evidence in the 14th century of the archbishops entering the city and using the palace for diplomatic and religious ceremonies, all paid for by continued control of regalian incomes from the city and its environs. Finally, it is widely recognized now that those Cologners who strove for personal liberty were the patrician elites and their supporters among the Mittelständen of merchants and artisans at most, while the vast majority of the population merely struggled for its daily bread in abject poverty and without any civic rights.

At points in the Stehkämper chapters, however, the older civic historiography of Cologne’s populace striving for personal freedom and communal liberty from the ancien regime jars with Dietmar’s more nuanced assessment, and so more clarity about the difference between Freiheit and Autonomie could still be achieved in the book, especially since Stehkämper’s traditional leitmotiv remains foregrounded in both the book’s structure as well as in its marketing. The publisher’s website declares the following as the book’s central thesis: »Mit dem Aufstand gegen Erzbischof Anno II. im Jahr 1074 begannen die Kölner, für individuelle Freiheitsrechte und politische Mitbestimmung zu kämpfen, und wurden damit zu Vorreitern einer ›kommunalen‹ Bewegung in Mittel- und Westeuropa. Die Schlacht von Worringen im Jahr 1288, in der die Kölner Bürger gegen ihren Stadtherren fochten, war ein dramatischer
Schlusspunkt in der Entwicklung des bürgerlichen Selbstbewusstseins. Somit kann das 13. Jahrhundert mit Fug und Recht als spannendster Zeitraum der Stadtgeschichte bezeichnet werden. « Above all therefore it is this core interpretation of the meaning of Cologne’s high medieval civic history that remains in need of a more nuanced and coherent articulation throughout the entire book and its public promotion. That being said, awareness of the reading public and the desire of the Historische Gesellschaft to honor Hugo Stehkämper for the civic pride he generated throughout his career may understandably be at play here too.

In his later years Hugo Stehkämper rarely cited new scholarship in his publications, most especially anything not written in German, and this is reflected in the body of academic research that undergirds the volume. It is to Carl Dietmar’s credit that works such as Tobias Wulf’s essential volume »Die Pfarrgemeinden der Stadt Köln. Entwicklung und Bedeutung vom Mittelalter bis in die Frühe Neuzeit« and Dieter Strauch’s equally key book »Der Große Schied von 1258« were added among others to the list of works consulted. Yet the balance of the bibliography is decidedly rooted in the 1980s and 1990s, now some 35 years ago. In specific, of the works cited, 4 were published before 1900, 11 from 1900 to 1950, 8 from the 1960s, 14 from the 1970s, 17 from the 1980s, 31 from the 1990s, and only 13 since the year 2000. Such generational gaps in scholarship are not uncommon when volumes take as long as this one has to reach publication. The same may well be said of the still anticipated fourth volume in the series »Köln im Spätmittelalter«, depending on how far along Wolfgang Herborn was before his death on 20 August 2015 at the age of 75.

Yet we should close on a note of appreciation for the collaborative effort made to edit, rewrite, and contribute new chapters in honor of a stalwart leader in the history of Cologne’s archival and medieval historiography. The limitations of the volume should never obscure the professional editing and writing of Carl Dietmar, who has indeed generated a volume that will not only honor Hugo Stehkämper before their colleagues in the Historische Gesellschaft but also reach a wider audience eager to read once more about the remarkable medieval history of their metropolis along the Rhine. The volume’s extensive images and enclosed city map are superbly chosen to illustrate all aspects of life in medieval Cologne with plates in both color and black-and-white. Finally, the layout and binding construction of the volume (indeed of the entire series) are simply outstanding. All historians will wish their own monographs would be produced with such beauty and high quality materials, and with the same civic purchase on the eyes and pocketbooks of a reading citizenry.

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